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Collaborative Responses to Attacks on Cotton: Is the IFCP Worth Joining?

With a Ph.D. in Agricultural and Resource Economics from Oregon State University in the USA, Dr. Terry Townsend is a consultant on commodity issues. He is currently working with the African Cotton and Textile Industries Federation (ACTIF). He served as executive director of the International Cotton Advisory Committee (ICAC) and has also worked at the United States Department of Agriculture for five years, analyzing the U.S. cotton industry and editing a magazine devoted to a cross-section of agricultural issues.

Does it make any difference that the World Wildlife Fund claims, "current cotton production methods are environmentally unsustainable..." "Bringing cotton production in line with even minimally acceptable environmental standards is a challenging task." <<https://www.worldwildlife.org/industries/cotton>>

Does it make any difference that an agency of the Government of Germany is implicitly encouraging German retailers to source products made of polyester, rather than of cotton or wool, because of alleged environmental damage and harm to animal welfare caused by natural fibre production? <<https://www.textilbuendnis.com/en/>>

Does it make any difference that documents provided during the Copenhagen Fashion Summit explicitly encourage designers and manufacturers to use polyester fabric rather than fabric made of cotton or wool? <<http://www.sustainabilityportal.net/blog/pulseofthefashionindustry>>

Does it make any difference when journalists routinely demonise cotton for "toxic and persistent synthetic pesticides and fertilizers, as well as genetically modified seeds?" <<http://wesleyanargus.com/2018/02/15/sustainable-fashion-and-its-marketing-problem/>>

Does it make any difference that a simple Google search on the phrase, "cotton and pesticides" yields 22,900,000 results, almost all highly negative?

Maybe not. Despite the attacks on cotton, world mill use is rising to more than 25 million tons this season. While still lower than 10 years ago, this is the highest level of consumption since 2011.

Maybe not. Despite the attacks on cotton, the Cotlook A Index is more than 10 cents per pound of lint above the long run average.

EXPERT'S Column



Dr. Terry Townsend

Maybe not. Despite the attacks on cotton, farmers seem to be expanding planted area in 2018, and both production and consumption are likely to increase again in 2018/19.

Maybe not. Maybe the attacks on cotton are just pesky little irritants, best ignored.

Maybe not, but, when you look at the statistics and see that cotton's share of world fibre use has fallen from around half in the 1980s to around one-fourth today, and when you realise that the world cotton industry has not grown in 10 years, despite robust GDP growth and population increase, it makes you kind of uneasy.

Maybe the attacks on cotton don't make a difference, but you have to wonder what might happen if more than just a few percent of consumers start to believe the allegations and try to avoid cotton as a result.

Maybe the attacks on cotton don't make a difference. On the other hand, maybe they do, or maybe they will.

Maybe the attacks on cotton don't make a difference, but any prudent investor considers alternative scenarios. Maybe the cotton industry should be mounting a coordinated rebuttal to the drum beat of negative allegations made about cotton, just in case it turns out that those allegations do make a difference.

History of Promotion Efforts

There is a long history of international efforts to promote global cotton consumption by providing positive information to consumers.

Cotton Council International (CCI) was formed in the mid-1950s as one of the first United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) "cooperators" to promote exports of U.S. cotton and cotton products. More than three-fourths of CCI's budget is provided by USDA, with the rest coming from private sector contributions. CCI's mission is to expand U.S. exports, not necessarily to build global demand for cotton, but the two objectives are closely aligned.

Cotton Incorporated (CI) was formed in the late 1960s in response to declining market share for cotton at retail in the United States. Originally supported entirely by cotton producers through a refundable checkoff, it is now funded by

producers through a non-refundable checkoff and a levy collected by the United States government at the border on the cotton content of imported products. The mission of CI is to explicitly demand growth for all cotton, not just U.S. cotton.

The International Institute for Cotton (IIC) was formed in 1968 and closed in 1994. The IIC was a sister intergovernmental organisation to the International Cotton Advisory Committee (ICAC), but its members were exclusively producing/exporting countries. Consuming countries who were members of ICAC at that time (primarily the U.K. and Japan) were not willing to support demand enhancement efforts and argued that such work should be done by producers. IIC was funded by governments, the U.S. was the largest contributor. At its peak around 1980 it had an annual budget of about \$5 million (\$13 million in today's dollars). The IIC functioned in Europe and Japan and was designed to complement the work of CI in the United States. IIC was considered effective when it was operating, but political support among producing countries eroded, and the organisation eventually died as governments withdrew.

The International Forum for Cotton Promotion (IFCP) was formed under the auspices of ICAC in 2002. IFCP is a small-budget organisation (annual budget of around \$15,000, of which about half comes from ICAC). The original vision of the IFCP was to encourage additional countries to emulate CI by implementing robust demand-enhancement activities for cotton in their home markets. IFCP was a clearinghouse for cost effective activities that could be implemented nationally by cotton industry organisations in producing countries.

Unfortunately, the IFCP concept was only partially accepted by a few countries. CONALGODON in Colombia gave away free t-shirts with the Colombian cotton emblem on the back to participants in marathons; as runners passed a camera, viewers on TV would see the cotton emblem. The Cotton Association of India (CAI) launched an educational program targeting children in about the 6th grade with information about cotton in India; the mascot is "King Cotton," a super hero who promotes national unity and economic growth. The association of cotton producers of Brazil (ABRAPA) has recently started a program of demand enhancement using money received from the United States

under the WTO Brazil Cotton Case. Cotton South Africa, Cotton Egypt Association and Supima in the United States are also working to expand consumption and exports of their cotton.

However, outside of Cotton Incorporated, there have been no other systematic or institutional efforts to boost generic demand for cotton around the world since the demise of the IIC 23 years ago. National cotton industry organisations and national governments do not see their self-interest being served in the generic promotion of cotton; they are only willing to promote exports or mill use of their own cotton. Further, associations and individual companies are reluctant to engage in public debates with environmentalists and retailers about the sustainability of cotton, and even if they are inclined to respond, they often lack the knowledge base to do so effectively.

The core problem is that consumer-facing demand enhancement, including campaigns to improve cotton's image by providing accurate information about production practices, is difficult and time consuming.

If the attacks on cotton made by NGOs and retailers have an impact, and if an organised international effort to offset those attacks with factual information about cotton production is to be initiated, then a new approach is needed.

A Role for the IFCP

The membership of the IFCP consists of cotton industry associations and private companies who voluntarily contribute at least \$1,000 per year to support efforts at positive messaging. At the end of 2017, members included Cotton Australia, Modern Nile, the Bremen Cotton Exchange, the Cotton Association of India, the Gdynia Cotton Association, Cotton South Africa, Cotton Incorporated and Supima. So far in 2018, Cotton Analytics and Cotton Council International have joined IFCP as new members. Mark Messura of Cotton Incorporated is Chair, Elke Hortmeyer of Bremen is Vice Chair and Terry Townsend of Cotton Analytics is Treasurer. ICAC serves as the umbrella organisation, holding the bank account and providing half the annual budget.

The officers of IFCP are leading a strategic rethink of the organisation's mission and how best to serve the objective of demand enhancement. IFCP met in Tashkent last October

on the margins of the ICAC Plenary Meeting and agreed to expand its range of activities to include providing organised responses to some of the more egregious allegations made against the cotton industry. With an annual budget of less than \$20,000, IFCP is not going to change the world, but the organisation can be effective as a thought leader within the apparel value chain.

IFCP will soon roll out a new web site and begin to engage systematically on the side of cotton with those who demonise. Members of IFCP will jointly decide which attacks on cotton merit the most immediate responses. Objective, fact-based rebuttals will be prepared, and members of the IFCP, along with the ICAC, can distribute those rebuttals through channels deemed most appropriate.

Do the attacks on cotton matter? Maybe, maybe not. The people making the attacks seem to think their allegations matter. The IFCP is a small, but prudent, institutional response to the most consequential of the attacks.

The Cotton Association of India (CAI) has supported demand enhancement through its school contact program. That effort to provide positive information about cotton to students and consumers is beneficial, but not sufficient. CAI and all other cotton industry organisations can support the IFCP in its work to challenge those who demonise by rebutting spurious allegations.

Retailers and environmentalists demonise cotton because it is without cost to do so. Within the demographic of urban consumers and activists ignorant of the realities of agriculture, allegations can be made without challenge, thus the incentives to make such allegations are dominant. Only by repeatedly and volubly challenging those who demonise, with public, specific, fact-based rebuttals, will the cotton industry be able to make demonisation expensive and thus shift the structure of incentives that currently makes demonisation profitable. The IFCP is the only international organisation taking on such a challenge, and the support of India, including CAI, will be appreciated.

(The views expressed in this column are of the author and not that of Cotton Association of India)

Today's Need – Cotton with Least Contamination

(Continued from Issue No. 46)

Dr. Brijender Mohan Vithal has a Ph.D. Agric (Plant Breeding-Cotton) from Punjab Agriculture University (PAU) Ludhiana. He has been associated with cotton R&D activities for more than three decades. He has worked as a Senior Cotton Breeder with PAU, GM Production / Executive Director with National Seeds Corporation and Director, DOCD, Ministry of Agriculture (MOA). He was Officer on Special Duties (OSD) to look after activities related with Tech Mission on Cotton (TMC) in CCI Ltd during its pre-launch period. He joined CCI Ltd - TMC Cell (MMIII & IV) during 1999 and continued working there till the end of the TMC Project in December 2010. He is still associated with cotton through agencies like ISCI.



GUEST COLUMN

Dr. Brijender Mohan Vithal
Cotton Expert

The Problems Associated with Indian Cottons and their Solutions

Technology Mission on Cotton

Government of India (GOI) considered all issues/problems associated with cotton and approved Technology Mission on Cotton (TMC) during 2000 with four mini missions - MM I & II (R & D activities) with Ministry of Agriculture and MM III & IV (Development of market yards (MM III) and modernisation of Ginning & Pressing factories (G & P Factories) under MM IV. The objective of TMC MM III & IV was to improve quality parameters and to bring contamination level of Indian cottons to the minimum levels.

Under TMC III & IV there was target of development of 250 market yards (approved 250 projects but actually developed/completed 246 market yards) and modernisation/upgradation of 1000 G & P Factories (approved 1011 units but actually modernised 859 units). In addition to the physical upgradation of cotton market yards and modernisation of G & P Factories, a culture for production/processing of clean cotton was developed. The manpower working in market yards and G & P Factories were given trainings by CIRCOT Mumbai/Nagpur and ATIRA Ahmedabad at the cost of TMC MM III & IV.

With the development of the market yards with

better infrastructure facilities, the trash contents in the kapas had come down significantly. Further, the farmers were enlightened how to bring/sell their kapas in the Agroproduce market yards (APMCs) so as to fetch a better price for their produce.

With the modernisation of G&P factories, trash contents in the pressed cotton also reduced significantly. It had come down to 1.5% as against 3% to 4.8% prior to TMC III & IV Project implementation. As a result of the same, the domestic spinning industry was able to get better processed cotton with the least contamination. Further,

the Indian cotton was accepted world over at par with the cotton of other exporting countries.

The Mini Mission III & IV of TMC terminated in December 2010

The quality of Indian cottons improved significantly during TMC Phase. The same has been authenticated by ITMF too. Contamination as well as seed cotton fragments reported by ITMF were lowest during 2009 (Diagrams 2 and 3 above). After 2009, both these components again started going up and during 2013 seed cotton fragments crossed the highest record level of 2003 since 1991 and set new records.

Why the Contamination and Seed Cotton Fragments Levels Has Started Going Up Since 2009?

1. The main reason for increase in the contamination level in Indian cottons, is because ginners could not get higher price from the mills for improved quality of cotton processed in their units that they had incurred extra for producing.

2. When mills did not give appropriate compensation for processing of clean cotton, G & P units that were modernised under TMC/or at their own, suffered a setback. Many such units removed additional machinery such as pre-cleaners, added under modernisation. There was an urgent need for such units to compete with market rates offered by mills and to keep their units operative for more number of days to remain economically viable.

3. GOI suddenly terminated the project of

TMC III & IV during December 2010. Half done is not done. Contamination is like cancer. If a cancer patient does not take the complete course of medicines and suspends it in between, the cancer will reappear in still more severe form. Same is the case with the contamination problem of Indian cottons.

4. The sudden termination of TMC III & IV was not desirable. CCI made its best efforts to restart the project. A series of meetings were held at various high levels of GOI but in vain. Some work of modernisation of G & P units under Technology Upgradation Funds (TUF) is being carried out, but desirable results could not be obtained/maintained.

5. On the sudden termination of TMC III & IV, the awareness and work culture of producing/marketing/processing cotton with least contamination by farmers/in market yards and in ginning factories developed under the project vanished due to lack of continuity in giving training and follow-up actions.

Production/Processing of Cotton with the Least Contamination

Prevention is always better than cure. It is better to not generate contamination than to clean it subsequently, at different stages of processing. To achieve this, all concerned industries have to work together. TMC III & IV developed a set of Best Management Practices (BMPs) for ginners, marketers and farmers to follow. The same are presented below:

Best Management Practices (TMC)

Sources of Contamination in India

The cotton gets contaminated at three levels i) At farms ii) In market yards and iii) In ginneries. The contamination can be minimised considerably by adopting the following Do's and Don'ts, at all the three stages:

Do's at Farms:

Pick kapas only from well-opened bolls.

Use only cotton bags for collecting bolls.

To ensure clean cotton, gather the insect-infested, stained and hard locks as well as locks picked up from the ground in a separate bag.

Instruct cotton pickers to cover their heads with cotton cloth to prevent kapas being contaminated with hair.

Stack kapas on cotton cloth or canvas and never keep cotton on the bare ground to prevent kapas being mixed with soil.

Clean the hand cart/tractor trolley before loading kapas.

Cover the cotton loaded in hand cart/tractor from all sides with cotton cloth or canvas.

Don'ts at Farms:

Do not pick cotton before dew drops evaporate in the early morning hours.

Do not gather leaf bits, stems, twigs, bracts, etc. while picking cotton.

Avoid mixing of kapas from different varieties or from different pickings of the same variety to maintain the grade of cotton.



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Do not add water to kapas.

Do not allow extraneous matter like fodder to get mixed with kapas.

Don't store fire crackers near kapas stock to prevent fire.

If farmers pay due attention while picking in fields; store their cotton produce variety/quality-wise and bring it to the markets without adding any water to increase its weight; their cotton will fetch better price. Not only will their income/net profit increase many fold, but they will also be contributing to the country's exchequer, if such cotton gets demand in overseas markets.

Do's at Market Yards: -

Keep market yards clean.

Unload kapas on cotton cloth or tarpaulin to enable evaluation by buyers.

Heap kapas on clean, paved ground or after spreading tarpaulins on the ground and protect the heap with a suitable cloth cover.

Cover kapas lots with tarpaulin so that rain water does not seep in.

Keep paved platforms away from trees to avoid contamination of cotton with leaves and bird nuisance.

Don'ts at Market Yards:

Never unload cotton on bare ground to prevent cotton being mixed with soil.

Do not mix seed cotton lots of different varieties, as such mixing will reduce the quality.

Do not expose kapas to natural elements like the sun, wind and rain.

Do not allow cattle and other animals to move around kapas heaps.

Do not allow people to sit and relax on kapas heaps.

Do not throw empty packets of tobacco, betel nuts, etc, on kapas heaps.

Do's at Ginning & Pressing Factories:

Transport kapas from market yard to ginnery in covered carts/tractors to protect it from the sun, rain and dust.

Keep factory premises clean by providing rubbish bins and spittoons at different places.

Heap kapas on clean, paved platforms or in well-ventilated covered godowns.

Engage extra labour to remove contaminants while forming kapas heaps.

To limit moisture content to within 7-9%, dry the moist kapas in the sun

Provide all workers with white cotton clothing and caps to cover their heads so that hair does not contaminate the cotton.

Handle all materials such as kapas, seed and lint with care to avoid mixing with foreign matter.

Install kapas pre-cleaner or use jalicots or chalnīs to remove immature bolls and foreign matter.

Install pneumatic kapas conveyor with stone catcher to transfer kapas to gins.

Instruct labourers to remove all foreign matter during feeding, if kapas is fed to gins manually.

Use grease instead of oil in gear boxes to prevent contamination with oil.

Use proper seed grid for processing cotton from different varieties.

Maintain proper overlap settings and ensure periodical grooving of leather roller to avoid seed cut and fiber breakage.

Ensure good house-keeping in ginneries to avert contamination.

Remove metal wires, bolts, machine parts, leather pieces, spilt oil, etc. to prevent their entry into kapas/lint.

Adopt pneumatic conveyance system to transport lint from gin house to baling press, to reduce manual handling to the minimum.

If baling press is located far away from the gin house, use cotton bags for packing and transporting lint.

Before feeding to baling press, once again ensure that no extraneous matter gets into the lint.

If possible, manual tramping with legs may be replaced with some mechanical device (auto tramping).

Use cotton cloth for wrapping pressed bales and ensure that all six sides are fully covered.

Stitch bales with white cotton thread instead of jute twine.

Use new iron straps of 18-19 gauge and 12.5 mm width for fastening cotton bales.

Use quick drying good quality ink to print specifications on bale cover. Printed label made of cotton or plastic sheet will be preferable.

Cotton bales should be stored in a covered godown to avert their exposure to wind, rain, dust, etc.

Don'ts at Ginning & Pressing Factories:

Never heap cotton on bare ground to prevent it from getting contaminated by soil and other impurities.

Do not allow children to play on or near kapas heaps.

Do not use jute bags or jute twines in bale packaging.

Do not roll boras on the ground while transporting them to the press house; use trolleys instead.

Do not spray water directly on to lint. Instead raise the pressing room humidity with Benson fans or nozzle spray systems.

Do not allow wearing of shoes during tramping, if compaction is done manually.

Do not keep inflammable materials inside the factory premises.

Do not permit smoking inside the factory.

Do not allow vehicles loaded with kapas to come near kapas heaps to minimise fire hazard.

Do not allow eating of food near kapas heaps.

Do not allow stray cattle and other animals inside the factory premises.

Do not allow workers to use cotton for wiping hands.

(The views expressed in this column are of the author and not that of Cotton Association of India)

Glimpses of the Mahashivratri festival

celebrated at the Bhid Bhanjan Mahadev Temple at Colaba, Mumbai, on February 13, 2018.



UPCOUNTRY SPOT RATES							(Rs./Qtl)					
Standard Descriptions with Basic Grade & Staple in Millimetres based on Upper Half Mean Length [By law 66 (A) (a) (4)]							Spot Rate (Upcountry) 2017-18 Crop FEBRUARY 2018					
Sr. No.	Growth	Grade Standard	Grade	Staple	Micronaire	Strength /GPT	12th	13th	14th	15th	16th	17th
1	P/H/R	ICS-101	Fine	Below 22mm	5.0-7.0	15	11782 (41900)		11726 (41700)	11642 (41400)	11614 (41300)	11614 (41300)
2	P/H/R	ICS-201	Fine	Below 22mm	5.0-7.0	15	11923 (42400)	H	11867 (42200)	11782 (41900)	11754 (41800)	11754 (41800)
3	GUJ	ICS-102	Fine	22mm	4.0-6.0	20	8436 (30000)		8352 (29700)	8352 (29700)	8323 (29600)	8323 (29600)
4	KAR	ICS-103	Fine	23mm	4.0-5.5	21	9392 (33400)	O	9364 (33300)	9364 (33300)	9336 (33200)	9336 (33200)
5	M/M	ICS-104	Fine	24mm	4.0-5.0	23	10236 (36400)		10236 (36400)	10236 (36400)	10208 (36300)	10208 (36300)
6	P/H/R	ICS-202	Fine	26mm	3.5-4.9	26	11107 (39500)		11051 (39300)	10967 (39000)	10939 (38900)	10939 (38900)
7	M/M/A	ICS-105	Fine	26mm	3.0-3.4	25	9729 (34600)	L	9786 (34800)	9786 (34800)	9758 (34700)	9758 (34700)
8	M/M/A	ICS-105	Fine	26mm	3.5-4.9	25	10236 (36400)		10236 (36400)	10236 (36400)	10208 (36300)	10208 (36300)
9	P/H/R	ICS-105	Fine	27mm	3.5-4.9	26	11276 (40100)	I	11220 (39900)	11135 (39600)	11107 (39500)	11107 (39500)
10	M/M/A	ICS-105	Fine	27mm	3.0-3.4	26	9842 (35000)		9926 (35300)	9926 (35300)	9898 (35200)	9898 (35200)
11	M/M/A	ICS-105	Fine	27mm	3.5-4.9	26	10404 (37000)		10461 (37200)	10432 (37100)	10404 (37000)	10404 (37000)
12	P/H/R	ICS-105	Fine	28mm	3.5-4.9	27	11445 (40700)	D	11389 (40500)	11304 (40200)	11276 (40100)	11276 (40100)
13	M/M/A	ICS-105	Fine	28mm	3.5-4.9	27	10854 (38600)		10770 (38300)	10742 (38200)	10714 (38100)	10714 (38100)
14	GUJ	ICS-105	Fine	28mm	3.5-4.9	27	11135 (39600)	A	11051 (39300)	11051 (39300)	11023 (39200)	11023 (39200)
15	M/M/A/K	ICS-105	Fine	29mm	3.5-4.9	28	11107 (39500)		11023 (39200)	10995 (39100)	10967 (39000)	10967 (39000)
16	GUJ	ICS-105	Fine	29mm	3.5-4.9	28	11332 (40300)		11248 (40000)	11248 (40000)	11220 (39900)	11220 (39900)
17	M/M/A/K	ICS-105	Fine	30mm	3.5-4.9	29	11417 (40600)	Y	11417 (40600)	11389 (40500)	11360 (40400)	11360 (40400)
18	M/M/A/K/T/O	ICS-105	Fine	31mm	3.5-4.9	30	11838 (42100)		11838 (42100)	11810 (42000)	11810 (42000)	11810 (42000)
19	A/K/T/O	ICS-106	Fine	32mm	3.5-4.9	31	12035 (42800)		12035 (42800)	12007 (42700)	12007 (42700)	12007 (42700)
20	M(P)/K/T	ICS-107	Fine	34mm	3.0-3.8	33	15747 (56000)		15747 (56000)	15719 (55900)	15719 (55900)	15719 (55900)

(Note: Figures in bracket indicate prices in Rs./Candy)