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Cotton Trade and Quality Control (Cotton Bales) Order

EXPERT'S Column



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The cotton industry is one of the oldest and most significant sectors in India, playing a vital role in the country's economy. In order to further improve business practices and policies in this sector, the Government of India is of the opinion that it is necessary to promulgate the Quality Control Order (QCO) called as Quality Control (Cotton Bales) order, to be effective from 27th August, 2024, through the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS). This regulation aims to ensure the quality of cotton bales, which are a critical raw material for the textile industry. In this article we would like to explore the business environment of cotton bales in India under the QCO mechanism, focusing on regulatory impacts, quality standards, industry responses and future prospects for the benefit of the sector.

1. Regulatory Framework and Implementation

The Quality Control Order (QCO) for cotton bales was introduced to standardise the quality of cotton and enhance its competitiveness in the global market. The BIS is responsible for setting and enforcing these standards. The QCO refers to the compliance with the IS12171: 2024 BIS standard. The primary objective of the QCO is to bring about the transparency in transactions in cotton bales, thereby ensuring that quality as declared is supplied to the textile industry.

Key Provisions:

- **Mandatory Certification:** All manufacturers and suppliers of cotton bales are required to obtain BIS certification. This ensures that the cotton meets predefined and certified quality standards.
- **Labelling Requirements:** Cotton bales must be labelled with specific information as per IS 12171:2024.
- **Compliance Checks:** Non-compliance can result in penalties, including fines and suspension of the BIS certification.

The implementation of the QCO needs involved extensive coordination between government bodies, industry associations, and cotton producers. Training and awareness programs are being conducted to help stakeholders understand the new requirements and ensure smooth transition.

2. Impact on Quality and Supply Chain

The QCO mechanism has had a profound impact on the quality of cotton bales in India. By enforcing quality standards, the regulation aims to promote transactions in certified and declared quality of cotton, which has historically affected the quality of end products in the textile industry.

Quality Improvements:

- **Reduction in Trash/Contamination:** The QCO will lead to significant reduction in foreign matter levels in cotton bales, as manufacturers will be now required to declare the trash level in the lot of cotton bales intended for sale.
- **Consistency in Quality:** The standardised quality evaluation will result in more consistent quality of cotton bales, benefiting textile manufacturers who require uniform raw materials for their production processes.

Supply Chain Dynamics:

- **Increased Costs:** Compliance with QCO standards might lead to a small increase in production costs for cotton bale manufacturers, primarily due to the need for better quality control processes and certification fees. However, these costs can be recovered since rate and quality may move in conjunction.
- **Supply Chain Disruptions:** Initially it may be felt that the enforcement of the QCO may impede the supply chain as many small-scale producers may struggle to comply with the order. However, this may not be the case since compliance with IS12171: 2024 can be achieved only by testing and declaration of quality along with labelling of the cotton bales in a lot.

Overall, while the QCO will improve the quality of cotton bales, it may also introduce transparency thereby ease of doing business in the sector.

3. Industry Response and Adaptation

The introduction of the QCO may elicit mixed reactions from the cotton bale industry. Large, well-established manufacturers generally support the regulation, as it helps improve the overall quality of cotton and enhances their competitiveness in international markets.

However, smaller producers may face some initial issues in adapting to the new requirements.

Supportive Measures:

- **Capacity Building:** Industry associations and government bodies should initiate programs to assist smaller producers in meeting the QCO standards. This includes training on quality control techniques and support in the certification process.
- **Collaborative Efforts:** Large manufacturers and industry leaders can come together to support the broader adoption of QCO standards. These collaborations often involve sharing best practices and resources to help smaller players comply with the regulations.

Challenges Faced:

- **Financial Strain:** The additional costs associated with obtaining BIS certification and maintaining quality standards might be a minuscule burden for some small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) which can be absorbed by quality and market dynamics.
- **Market Access:** The certification will definitely improve the access to both domestic and international markets, uplifting the business opportunities and growth potential.

Despite these challenges, there will be the long-term benefits of the QCO in terms of enhancing the quality and reputation of Indian cotton.

4. Future Prospects and Strategic Implications

Looking ahead, the QCO mechanism is expected to drive positive changes in the cotton bales business environment in India. The regulation is likely to have constructive implications for different stakeholders.

Positive Prospects:

- **Market Expansion:** As Indian cotton gains a reputation for higher quality, there will be opportunities for expanding into premium segments of the global market. This could enhance export revenues and create new growth avenues for the industry.
- **Technological Advancements:** The need for compliance with QCO standards may drive

technological advancements in the cotton industry. Investments in better processing equipment, quality control systems, and automation are expected to increase efficiency and productivity.

Strategic Adjustments:

- **Consolidation:** The consolidation in the industry with smaller players coming together might encourage investment in common facilities like testing labs etc. This could result in a more organised and efficient industry structure.
- **Sustainability Focus:** The QCO provides an impetus for adopting sustainable practices in cotton production. By emphasising quality and reducing trash, the industry can also focus on sustainable farming practices, reducing environmental impact and enhancing the long-term viability of cotton farming.

Policy Recommendations:

- **Support for SMEs:** Continued support from the government and industry associations is crucial to help SMEs navigate the challenges of the QCO by understanding and implementation of the standard. Technical assistance and simplified certification processes can facilitate compliance.
- **Global Alignment:** Aligning Indian cotton standards with international norms can further boost the competitiveness of Indian cotton in global markets. Collaborative efforts with international bodies can help achieve this alignment.

Conclusion:

The Quality Control Order regime may introduce positive changes to the cotton bales business environment in India. While the regulation will improve the quality and marketability of Indian cotton, the issues faced by smaller producers may be mitigated by awareness meets and training. Strategic adaptations and supportive measures are essential to ensure that the benefits of the QCO are realised across the entire industry, paving the way for a more robust and competitive cotton sector in India.

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

Sr. No.	Parameters	Grade				Staple				Micronaire	
		Premium		Discounts		Premium		Discounts		Micronaire	Discount
		Grade	Premium Amount	Grade	Discount Amount	Staple	Premium Amount	Staple	Discount Amount		
8	P/H/R (U)	Superfine	+1600	Fully Good	-1300			26	-1000	3.0 - 3.2	-800
	ICS-105										
	(Staple length 27mm)		(+2.44)		(-1.98)				(-1.53)		(-1.22)
	Micronaire 3.5 - 4.9	Extra S. Fine	N.A.	Good	-1600					3.3 - 3.4	-400
	(Grade : Fine) Trash - 4% Strength/GPT 26				(-2.44)						(-0.61)
9	M/M(P)/SA/TL/G ICS-105	Superfine	N.A.	Fully Good	-800	28	+1500			2.7 - 2.9	-500
	(Staple length 27mm)										
	Micronaire 3.0 - 3.4				(-1.22)		(+2.29)				(-0.76)
	(Grade: Fine)	Extra S. Fine	N.A.	Good	-1000						
	Trash - 4% Strength/GPT 25				(-1.53)						
10	M/M(P)/SA/TL	Superfine	+1000	Fully Good	-1200						
	ICS-105										
	(Staple length 27mm)		(+1.53)		(-1.83)						
	Micronaire 3.5 - 4.9	Extra S. Fine	N.A.	Good	-1400						
	(Grade:Fine) Trash - 3.5% Strength/GPT 26				(-2.14)						
11	P/H/R (U)	Superfine	+1600	Fully Good	-1300	29	N.A.			3.0 - 3.2	-800
	ICS-105										
	(Staple length 28mm)		(+2.44)		(-1.98)						(-1.22)
	Micronaire 3.5 - 4.9	Extra S. Fine	N.A.	Good	-1600					3.3 - 3.4	-400
	(Grade:Fine)				(-2.44)						(-0.61)
	Trash - 4% Strength/GPT 27										
12	M/M(P)	Superfine	+1100	Fully Good	-1000					3.0 - 3.2	-1200
	ICS-105										
	(Staple length 28mm)		(+1.68)		(-1.53)						(-1.83)
	Micronaire 3.7 - 4.5	Extra S. Fine	N.A.	Good	-1300 (-1.98)					3.3 - 3.4	-800 (-1.22)
	(Grade:Fine) Trash - 3.5% Strength/GPT 27								3.5 - 3.6	-400 (-0.61)	
13	SA/TL/K	Superfine	+1100	Fully Good	-1000					3.0 - 3.2	-1200
	ICS-105										
	(Staple length 28mm)		(+1.68)		(-1.53)						(-1.83)
	Micronaire 3.7 - 4.5	Extra S. Fine	N.A.	Good	-1300 (-1.98)					3.3 - 3.4	-800 (-1.22)
	(Grade:Fine) Trash - 3.5% Strength/GPT 27								3.5 - 3.6	-400 (-0.61)	
14	GUJ	Superfine	+1100	Fully Good	-1000			27	-1500	3.0 - 3.2	-1200
	ICS-105										
	(Staple length 28mm)		(+1.68)		(-1.53)				(-2.29)		(-1.83)
	Micronaire 3.7 - 4.5	Extra S. Fine	N.A.	Good	-1300 (-1.98)					3.3 - 3.4	-800 (-1.22)
	(Grade:Fine)										
	Trash - 3% Strength/GPT 27								3.5 - 3.6	-400 (-0.61)	
15	R (L)	Superfine	+1100	Fully Good	-1200			28	-1200	3.0 - 3.2	-1200
	ICS-105										
	(Staple length 29mm)		(+1.68)		(-1.83)				(-1.83)		(-1.83)
	Micronaire 3.7 - 4.5	Extra S. Fine	N.A.	Good	-1400					3.3 - 3.4	-800 (-1.22)
	(Grade:Fine)										
	Trash - 3.5% Strength/GPT 28				(-2.14)					3.5 - 3.6	-400 (-0.61)

Sr. No.	Parameters	Grade				Staple				Micronaire	
		Premium		Discounts		Premium		Discounts		Micronaire	Discount
		Grade	Premium Amount	Grade	Discount Amount	Staple	Premium Amount	Staple	Discount Amount		
16	M/M(P)	Superfine	+800	Fully Good	-800					3.0 - 3.2	-1200
	ICS-105										
	(Staple length 29mm)										
	Micronaire 3.7 - 4.5	Extra S. Fine	+1100	Good	-1100					3.3 - 3.4	-800 (-1.22)
	(Grade:Fine)										
Trash-3.5%Strength/GPT28	(+1.68)	(-1.68)	3.5 - 3.6	-400 (-0.61)							
17	SA/TL/K	Superfine	+800	Fully Good	-800					3.0 - 3.2	-1200
	ICS-105										
	(Staple length 29mm)										
	Micronaire 3.7 - 4.5	Extra S. Fine	+1100	Good	-1100					3.3 - 3.4	-800 (-1.22)
	(Grade:Fine)									(+1.68)	(-1.68)
Trash - 3% Strength/GPT 28			3.5 - 3.6	-400 (-0.61)							
18	GUJ	Superfine	+800	Fully Good	-800	30	N.A.			3.0 - 3.2	-1200
	ICS-105										
	(Staple length 29mm)										
	Micronaire 3.7 - 4.5	Extra S. Fine	+1100	Good	-1100					3.3 - 3.4	-800 (-1.22)
	(Grade:Fine)									(+1.68)	(-1.68)
Trash - 3% Strength/GPT 28			3.5 - 3.6	-400 (-0.61)							
19	M/M(P)	Superfine	+900	Fully Good	-900					3.0 - 3.2	-1200
	ICS-105										
	(Staple length 30mm)										
	Micronaire 3.7 - 4.5	Extra S. Fine	+1200	Good	-1100					3.3 - 3.4	-800 (-1.22)
	(Grade:Fine)										
Trash - 3% Strength/GPT 29	(1.83)	(-1.68)	3.5 - 3.6	-400 (-0.61)							
20	SA/TL/K/O	Superfine	+900	Fully Good	-800					3.0 - 3.2	-1200
	ICS-105										
	(Staple length 30mm)										
	Micronaire 3.7 - 4.5	Extra S. Fine	+1200	Good	-1000					3.3 - 3.4	-800 (-1.22)
	(Grade:Fine)										
Trash - 3% Strength/GPT 29	(+1.83)	(-1.53)	3.5 - 3.6	-400 (-0.61)							
21	M/M(P)	Superfine	+900	Fully Good	-1000					3.0 - 3.2	-1200
	ICS-105										
	(Staple length 31mm)										
	Micronaire 3.7 - 4.5	Extra S. Fine	+1200	Good	-1200					3.3 - 3.4	-800 (-1.22)
	(Grade : Fine) Trash - 3% Strength/GPT 30									(+1.83)	(-1.83)
22	SA/TL/K/IN/O	Superfine	+900	Fully Good	-1000					3.0 - 3.2	-1200
	ICS-105										
	(Staple length 31mm)										
	Micronaire 3.7 - 4.5	Extra S. Fine	+1200	Good	-1200					3.3 - 3.4	-800 (-1.22)
	(Grade : Fine) Trash - 3% Strength/GPT 30									(+1.83)	(-1.83)

Sr. No.	Parameters	Grade				Staple				Micronaire	
		Premium		Discounts		Premium		Discounts		Micronaire	Discount
		Grade	Premium Amount	Grade	Discount Amount	Staple	Premium Amount	Staple	Discount Amount		
23	SA/TL/K/TN/O	Superfine	N.A.	Fully Good	N.A.			31	N.A.	3.0 - 3.2	N.A.
	ICS-106										
	(Staple length 32mm)										
	Micronaire 3.5 - 4.2	Extra S. Fine	N.A.	Good	N.A.					3.3 - 3.4	N.A.
	(Grade : Fine) Trash - 3% Strength/GPT 31										
24	M/M(P)	Superfine	+1500	Fully Good	-1000	35	+2000	33	-3000	2.5 - 2.7	-700
	ICS-107										
	(Staple length 34mm)		(+2.29)		(-1.53)		(+3.05)		(-4.58)		(-1.07)
	Micronaire 2.8 - 3.7	Extra S. Fine	N.A.	Good	-1500	36	+3500				
	(Grade : Fine) Trash - 4% Strength/GPT 33				(-2.29)	(+5.34)					
25	K/TN	Superfine	+2000	Fully Good	-1000	35	+2000	33	-4000	2.5 - 2.7	-700
	ICS-107										
	(Staple length 34mm)		(+3.05)		(-1.53)		(+3.05)		(-6.11)		(-1.07)
	Micronaire 2.8 - 3.7	Extra S. Fine	N.A.	Good	-1500	36	+3500				
	(Grade : Fine) Trash - 3.5% Strength/GPT 34				(-2.29)	(+5.34)					
26	M/M(P)	Superfine	+1500	Fully Good	-1000	36	+2000	34	-2000	2.5 - 2.7	-700
	ICS-107										
	(Staple length 35mm)		(+2.29)		(-1.53)		(+3.05)		(-3.05)		(-1.07)
	Micronaire 2.8 - 3.7	Extra S. Fine	N.A.	Good	-1500						
	(Grade : Fine) Trash - 4% Strength/GPT 35				(-2.29)						
27	K/TN	Superfine	+2000	Fully Good	-1000	36	+1500	34	-2000	2.5 - 2.7	-700
	ICS-107										
	(Staple length 35mm)		(+3.05)		(-1.53)		(+2.29)		(-3.05)		(-1.07)
	Micronaire 2.8 - 3.7	Extra S. Fine	N.A.	Good	-1500						
	(Grade : Fine) Trash - 3.5% Strength/GPT 35				(-2.29)						

Conversion factor – 655.03 based on the RBI closing exchange rate of 1 US \$ = Rs.83.55 prevailing on 26th June 2024

Figures in bracket denotes value difference in Cents per Lb.

Note :

- (1) These Value Differences are applicable to domestic trade.
- (2) The above differences are merely indicative in nature. Cotton Association of India gives no warranty as to the accuracy or completeness of information contained herein and accepts no legal responsibility howsoever arising in relation to such information.
- (3) Premium and Discount mentioned in Indian Rupees above will remain constant for one month whereas the same mentioned in Cents per Lb. will vary as per the exchange rate fixed by the Reserve Bank of India.

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) 2023-24 Crop July 2024					
Sr. No.	Growth	Grade Standard	Grade	Staple	Micronaire	Gravimetric Trash	Strength /GPT	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
1	P/H/R	ICS-101	Fine	Below 22mm	5.0 – 7.0	4%	15	13835 (49200)	13947 (49600)	13947 (49600)	14088 (50100)	14088 (50100)	14088 (50100)
2	P/H/R (SG)	ICS-201	Fine	Below 22mm	5.0 – 7.0	4.5%	15	14004 (49800)	14116 (50200)	14116 (50200)	14257 (50700)	14257 (50700)	14257 (50700)
3	GUJ	ICS-102	Fine	22mm	4.0 – 6.0	13%	20	11360 (40400)	11445 (40700)	11670 (41500)	11614 (41300)	11614 (41300)	11614 (41300)
4	KAR	ICS-103	Fine	22mm	4.5 – 6.0	6%	21	12682 (45100)	12766 (45400)	12766 (45400)	12766 (45400)	12766 (45400)	12766 (45400)
5	M/M (P)	ICS-104	Fine	23mm	4.5 – 7.0	4%	22	14791 (52600)	14904 (53000)	14904 (53000)	15044 (53500)	15100 (53700)	15100 (53700)
6	P/H/R(U) (SG)	ICS-202	Fine	27mm	3.5 – 4.9	4.5%	26	15269 (54300)	15325 (54500)	15382 (54700)	15522 (55200)	15578 (55400)	15635 (55600)
7	M/M(P)/SA/TL	ICS-105	Fine	26mm	3.0 – 3.4	4%	25	N.A. (N.A.)	N.A. (N.A.)	N.A. (N.A.)	N.A. (N.A.)	N.A. (N.A.)	N.A. (N.A.)
8	P/H/R(U)	ICS-105	Fine	27mm	3.5 – 4.9	4%	26	15410 (54800)	15466 (55000)	15522 (55200)	15663 (55700)	15719 (55900)	15775 (56100)
9	M/M(P)/SA/TL/G	ICS-105	Fine	27mm	3.0 – 3.4	4%	25	14622 (52000)	14622 (52000)	14622 (52000)	14622 (52000)	14622 (52000)	14594 (51900)
10	M/M(P)/SA/TL	ICS-105	Fine	27mm	3.5 – 4.9	3.5%	26	15522 (55200)	15578 (55400)	15578 (55400)	15578 (55400)	15578 (55400)	15550 (55300)
11	P/H/R(U)	ICS-105	Fine	28mm	3.5 – 4.9	4%	27	15607 (55500)	15663 (55700)	15719 (55900)	15860 (56400)	15916 (56600)	15972 (56800)
12	M/M(P)	ICS-105	Fine	28mm	3.7 – 4.5	3.5%	27	16000 (56900)	16113 (57300)	16169 (57500)	16085 (57200)	16085 (57200)	16056 (57100)
13	SA/TL/K	ICS-105	Fine	28mm	3.7 – 4.5	3.5%	27	16056 (57100)	16169 (57500)	16225 (57700)	16197 (57600)	16197 (57600)	16169 (57500)
14	GUJ	ICS-105	Fine	28mm	3.7 – 4.5	3%	27	15972 (56800)	16085 (57200)	16085 (57200)	16113 (57300)	16113 (57300)	16085 (57200)
15	R(L)	ICS-105	Fine	29mm	3.7 – 4.5	3.5%	28	16028 (57000)	16085 (57200)	16141 (57400)	16225 (57700)	N.A. (N.A.)	N.A. (N.A.)
16	M/M(P)	ICS-105	Fine	29mm	3.7 – 4.5	3.5%	28	16281 (57900)	16394 (58300)	16394 (58300)	16366 (58200)	16366 (58200)	16310 (58000)
17	SA/TL/K	ICS-105	Fine	29mm	3.7 – 4.5	3%	28	16366 (58200)	16478 (58600)	16478 (58600)	16478 (58600)	16478 (58600)	16422 (58400)
18	GUJ	ICS-105	Fine	29mm	3.7 – 4.5	3%	28	16253 (57800)	16366 (58200)	16366 (58200)	16338 (58100)	16338 (58100)	16310 (58000)
19	M/M(P)	ICS-105	Fine	30mm	3.7 – 4.5	3%	29	16591 (59000)	16703 (59400)	16703 (59400)	16703 (59400)	16703 (59400)	16675 (59300)
20	SA/TL/K/O	ICS-105	Fine	30mm	3.7 – 4.5	3%	29	16619 (59100)	16731 (59500)	16731 (59500)	16731 (59500)	16731 (59500)	16703 (59400)
21	M/M(P)	ICS-105	Fine	31mm	3.7 – 4.5	3%	30	16759 (59600)	16759 (59600)	16759 (59600)	N.A. (N.A.)	N.A. (N.A.)	N.A. (N.A.)
22	SA/TL/K/TN/O	ICS-105	Fine	31mm	3.7 – 4.5	3%	30	16788 (59700)	16788 (59700)	16788 (59700)	N.A. (N.A.)	N.A. (N.A.)	N.A. (N.A.)
23	SA/TL/K/TN/O	ICS-106	Fine	32mm	3.5 – 4.2	3%	31	N.A. (N.A.)	N.A. (N.A.)	N.A. (N.A.)	N.A. (N.A.)	N.A. (N.A.)	N.A. (N.A.)
24	M/M(P)	ICS-107	Fine	34mm	2.8 - 3.7	4%	33	23058 (82000)	23058 (82000)	23058 (82000)	23058 (82000)	23058 (82000)	23058 (82000)
25	K/TN	ICS-107	Fine	34mm	2.8 - 3.7	3.5%	34	23902 (85000)	23902 (85000)	23902 (85000)	23902 (85000)	23902 (85000)	23902 (85000)
26	M/M(P)	ICS-107	Fine	35mm	2.8 - 3.7	4%	35	23480 (83500)	23480 (83500)	23480 (83500)	23480 (83500)	23480 (83500)	23480 (83500)
27	K/TN	ICS-107	Fine	35mm	2.8 - 3.7	3.5%	35	24464 (87000)	24464 (87000)	24464 (87000)	24464 (87000)	24464 (87000)	24464 (87000)

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