

# COTTON

Cotton is a natural fibre and all of the cotton plant is harvested and used in production, so there is no waste. It is grown in warm subtropical areas around the world; India is still the top producer, followed by China and the United States. Manual harvesting is still the norm in countries such as Turkey, Pakistan and Xinjiang.

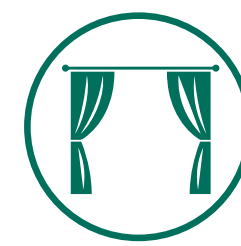
The cotton industry employs more than 100 million people and it is one of the top five global soft commodities in terms of annual consumption (along with cocoa, coffee, wheat and sugar).



bed sheets and towels



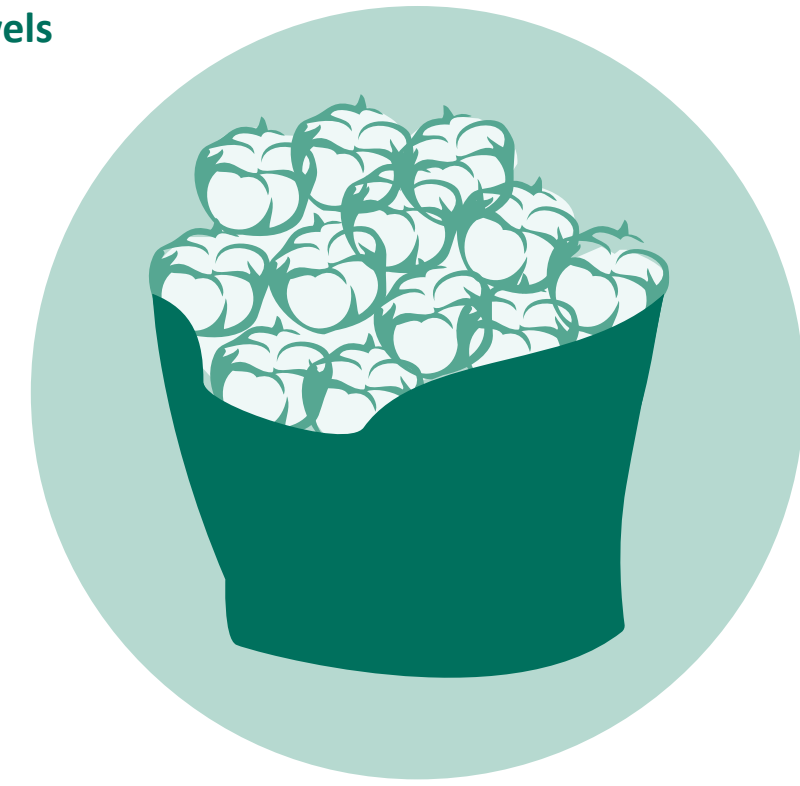
canvas and denim



curtains and rugs



cottonseed oil



USES OF COTTON

## SUPPORTING SMALLHOLDERS

IDH estimates that 99% of the world's cotton farmers across 70 countries are smallholders. Supporting livelihoods is a critical issue, as well as addressing challenges including working conditions, child labour and the role of women. In addition to smallholders, ensuring protection of migrant and seasonal workers is key.

## SHARING BEST PRACTICE

Sharing and adopting best agricultural practices is essential to help farmers increase production without adverse effects. For example, water, pesticide and fertiliser use can lead to soil erosion, soil salination, changing water tables, and negative effects on biodiversity. These can be addressed with training.



## BUILDING SUSTAINABLE DEMAND

Due to lack of current market demand for certified cotton, farmer groups often end up selling the majority of their sustainable produce as conventional cotton and therefore lose money. The industry needs to work together to find mechanisms so that farmers can make informed decisions on price and can make a profit even if they are not selling their cotton with a premium.

## SUSTAINABILITY STANDARDS

There are several certification schemes (Better Cotton Initiative, Organic, Cotton Made in Africa) and other options including Fairtrade, that support best practice in sustainability standards across social and environmental issues. Supporting smallholder farmers and co-operatives to meet certification requirements is an important step.

**proforest**

Proforest has been working with companies and the certification body, Better Cotton Initiative, to support the responsible sourcing and production of cotton.

