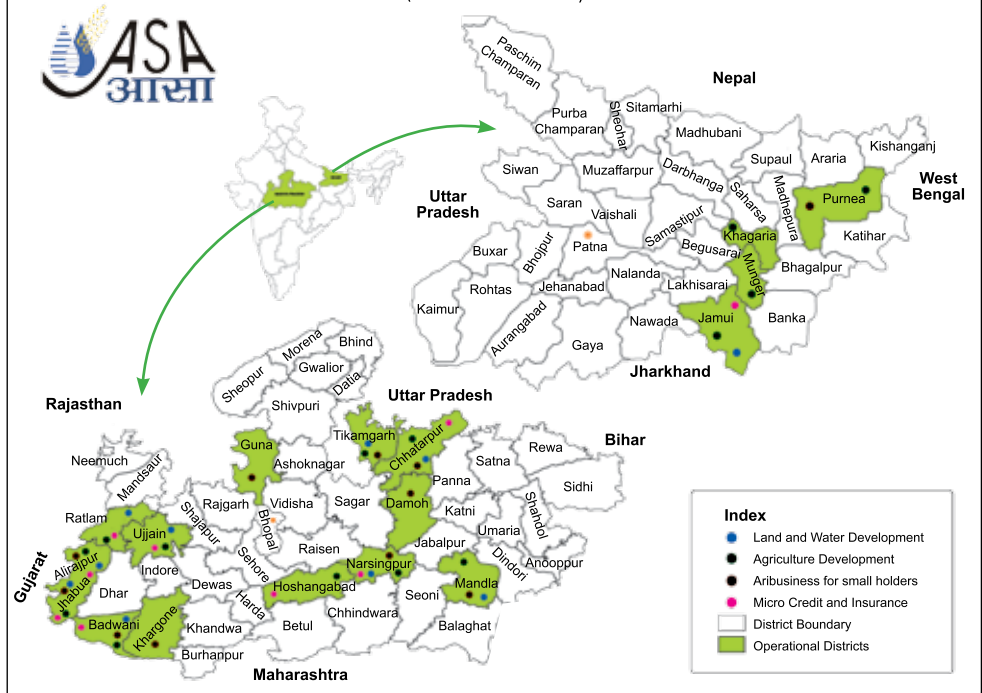


better cotton
improved environment
dignified lives -
farmers' speak



ASA'S OPERATIONAL DISTRICTS AND PROGRAMMES IN BIHAR AND MADHYA PRADESH
(As on 31ST March 2011)



About Action for Social Advancement (ASA)

www.asaindia.org

Over the last one and half decades, ASA has grown to be one of the well known NGO's working for over 120000 rural families across 1000 villages. It works in most backward and prone to frequent drought areas, which create a vicious cycle of poverty and debt for the people.

ASA has a people-centric model with interventions in three key areas of land and water resource development, agriculture productivity enhancement and agribusiness promotion for small and marginal farmers.

These initiatives embody the vision of sustainability. On one hand, we support rural poor to benefit from the local resources through environmentally sustainable technologies and processes and building linkages and on the other, we work continually towards enhancing the sustainability of natural resources. The initiatives include:

- Land & water resources development
 - Watershed Development
 - Water Resources Development
 - Minor Irrigation
 - Participatory Irrigation Management
- Agriculture productivity enhancement & Agribusiness promotion for small & marginal farmers
 - Participatory Varietal Selection and Promotion
 - Farmers' Field School
 - System of Rice & wheat Intensification
 - Promotion of Responsible Soybean
 - Promotion of Better Cotton
 - Digital Green –Application of ICT in Agriculture
 - Agribusiness Promotion for small holders
 - Crop seed Production
- Institutional credit for agriculture
- Research & Training

Introduction

Three hours from Indore, in southwest Madhya Pradesh, the central state of India, lies a partly rocky region collectively known as “Nimad”. Literally translated, it means, ‘in the shade of the “neem”’, a highly revered medicinal tree native to India. True to its name, one can see the countryside dotted with plenty of neem trees.



For miles around in this region, one can also see cotton, or ‘white gold’, as it is popularly called, being grown. The rich dark soil and the climate are just right for the crop. However, until a little over a year ago, not many small farmers here could claim to have benefited sufficiently from having chosen to grow it.

There is a change happening slowly but surely in some areas of this region. In the past 18 months, an intervention led by the staff of Action for Social Advancement (ASA) has impacted 8000 farmers, having a total land area of over 22,000 acres. The farmers are being trained to grow cotton in a scientific manner according to the Minimum Production Criteria (MPCs) of the Better Cotton Initiative.

ASA is a non-profit organisation established in the year 1996 and registered under the Gujarat Societies Registration Act, 1860 and the Bombay Public Trust Act, 1951. It has its Head office in Bhopal, India.

With a mission aimed at ensuring livelihoods of poor people through providing developmental services (in particular through natural resources development), its approach is firmly founded on participatory action at the community level. It focuses especially on developing livelihood security for poor women and men, and is currently active in 15 districts of Madhya Pradesh and four districts of Bihar, covering over 1000 villages and directly working with over 1,20,000 poor rural families.



ASA’s developmental programmes have addressed the following areas:

- Land & Water Resources Development
- Agriculture Productivity Enhancement & Agribusiness Promotion for Small and Marginal Farmers



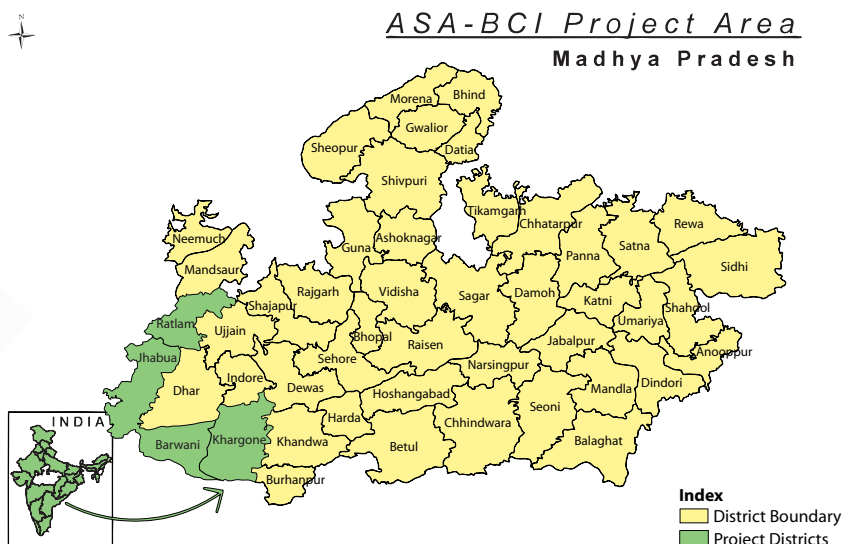
- Institutional Credit for Agriculture
- Research and Training

With a professionally qualified staff of 145, the organisation has 27 Operational Field Locations including the Head Office in Bhopal (capital of Madhya Pradesh).

Since 2010, ASA has been working for the promotion of the **Better Cotton Initiative** with over 8000 small farmers of the “Nimad” region (in southwest Madhya Pradesh), in collaboration with SOLIDARIDAD, a Dutch NGO, endorsed by the BCI as Implementing Partner in India. SOLIDARIDAD with its Cotton Solutions Network in India, is supporting ASA in the field implementation of the project.

Better Cotton Initiative

The Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) is a programme that exists to make global cotton production better for the people who produce it, better for the environment it grows in and better for the sector’s future. BCI exists in order to respond to the current impacts of cotton production worldwide. It aims to promote measurable improvements in the key environmental and social impacts of cotton cultivation worldwide to make it more economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable. Since 2005, BCI has been working





with organisations from across the cotton supply chain and interested stakeholders to facilitate a solution for the mainstream cotton sector. Its philosophy is to develop a market for a new mainstream commodity – ‘Better Cotton’ and thereby transform the cotton commodity to bring long-term benefits for the environment, farmers and other people dependent on cotton for their livelihood.

The long term objectives of the programme are to:

- Demonstrate the inherent benefits of Better Cotton production, particularly the financial profitability for farmers
- Reduce the impact of water and pesticide use on human and environmental health
- Improve soil health and biodiversity
- Promote Decent Work for farming communities and cotton farm workers
- Facilitate global knowledge exchange on more sustainable cotton production
- Increase the traceability along the cotton supply chain.

The duration of ASA’s BCI project is five years, and its coverage is across four districts in MP: Barwani, Khargone, Jhabua and Ratlam. About 20,000 smallholders are to be covered by this project. The year-wise projections are given below:

Projections	Year 1 (2010-11)	Year 2 (2011-12)	Year 3 (2012-13)	Year 4 (2013-14)	Year 5 (2014-15)
Target number of farmers	5135	8059	10000	13000	17000
Target number of villages	61	92	110	140	180
Target area (Hectare)	6119	9084	17000	22100	28900
Target production (MT Lint)	3029	5696	11220	14886	19074





The key issues the project recognises are:

- Small holding size (less than 2 hectares)
- Poor knowledge of good agricultural practices and quality issues of cotton production leading to unbalanced and unsafe use of agro-chemicals and low productivity
- Gender biases in work division, wages, benefit sharing
- A poor linkage with market

To overcome these, it has introduced key interventions like:

- Organising producers in Learning Groups (LGs)
- Facilitating LGs to learn and apply good agricultural practices for crop protection, water management, soil health improvement and improving fibre quality
- The concept of decent work (e.g., non-use of child labour, pregnant women, bonded labour, etc.) and market linkages in the form of direct contact with retailers
- Convergence of other developmental schemes of the Government, especially those with water and land development measures.

In the year 2010-11:

- 5135 producers were trained on BCI Principles and Criteria (MPC)
- 249 Learning Groups were formed and nurtured as institutions
- 193 LGs (80%) qualified in meeting BCI criteria by third party audit
- 5632 Tonne of BCI cotton produced
- Producers reported savings in cost of production about \$150 per hectare due to practising of good agriculture practices
- Ginners awareness programme organised and initial contact with the mainstream supply chain was established.

What this document is about

In the current financial year (2011-12), 8,059 cotton producers have registered for BCI, 3000 more than last year. Once the cycle of cotton production is complete, with picking season on, the next one is about to begin. This document showcases, in the words of the producers, the changes experienced by them over the past one year since they have been associated with BCI, in terms of increase in knowledge, discarding of old practices in favour of new effective ones, their changed financial status, their future plans, expectations and concerns.



Village: Jharolimal

Producers' Unit: Khargone, Madhya Pradesh Cluster: Thikri

Jharolimal is a small cotton growing village in the Thikri cluster of Khargone district of 'Nimad' region. Here, cotton fields are full of the summer crop of cotton waiting to be picked. For many farmers, two or three pickings are already over.

Five women are busy picking cotton in the fields of farmer Mohan Gangaram Dhankar, grown on 6.25 acres of his land. One of them is his wife Sangeetabai. They have their hair securely tied in place with a cloth.

Another farmer from the village, Mahimaram Thakur, owns 15 bighas (around 6 acres) of land. "Most of this land is lying infertile. Out of the entire lot, four bighas (around 1.6 acres) is an overgrown jungle. I used to grow Moong dal (green gram), Jowar (sorghum) and Chaulai (cow pea), which did not give me much financial returns, but I had no choice, as my biggest problem was insufficient water.



"If even a single strand of hair gets into the cotton, the whole lot can get spoilt."

Mohan, farmer





“When I first attended the BCI meetings, I decided to grow cotton in one bigha (around 0.4 acres) of land. During the training sessions, I was advised to build a tank, and get it filled with water by a tanker for my crops. With this small change, I have been able to get a yield of four quintals of cotton this year. With the money I earn, I plan to revitalise the infertile land, and grow more cotton this year.”

His fellow villager, Shobharam Dhankar, who is growing better cotton on 3.08 acres of his land shares, “Earlier, we did not know that pesticides could be so harmful. We just wrapped our heads in a towel, that’s all. At the most, after

spraying, we used to wash our hands with mud. Most of us experienced body rash, irritation in the eyes, breathlessness, which we would get treated at the local hospital. This would add to our overall expenditure.”

“It was only during training that we learnt how to protect ourselves by wearing gloves and masks. Sometime this year, I remember, a young boy named Bishan from Bhoinda village dismissed the learnings, and continued to spray pesticides in the same way as we had earlier. He had such a severe attack of fainting, body rash and breathlessness that he had to be moved to a hospital in Indore (around three hours away), where it cost his family Rs. 60,000 to get him treated.”

“Then, during our training as part of BCI, we learnt that our crops of cotton could be saved by planting a border crop (*shown in the photo*), as insects would attack it first, which in turn would reduce our cost of pesticides. Moreover, we could be selective in the use of pesticides, so that the friendly insects (called ‘mitr keet’ in Hindi) could be saved.”



“We would plant four to five rows of ‘jowar’ near the cotton plants with the aim of having an extra crop as well as fodder for our cattle. We stopped this once we started getting Bt cotton, as we thought, why not use the space to grow more cotton?”

Badri Mania Chauhan



An upbeat Badrilal Sitaram Yadav (*in photo below*), who owns 9.88 acres of land, and is growing better cotton on 6.17 acres, says, “Earlier we never



insisted on a bill for the purchases, whether it was seeds, manure, pesticides or urea. As a result, we paid whatever the shopkeeper asked us to, which was sometimes more than double its market price. At the BCI trainings, we were told about the importance of asking for a bill.”

On the topic of billing, Mahimaram Thakur narrates an incident. “Once, a fellow farmer went up to a local shop, Unnat Krishi Sewa Kendra (literally meaning Progressive Farmers’ Service Centre), to buy some packets of seeds. At the time of payment, the farmer gave the shopkeeper Rs. 850, the market price printed on the packet. The shopkeeper insisted that he pay

him Rs. 1500, almost double the MRP. The farmer stood his ground, and threatened to report him, upon which the shopkeeper gave him the seeds at the quoted MRP.”

Some of those present feel this was an exception rather than the rule, as, most shopkeepers, when confronted with the demand for a bill, simply say that the required items are out of stock. However, farmers share that they saw an advantage in getting a bill at the quoted MRP, even if it means paying more in reality. This is because in case of any defect, like for example the seeds not germinating, they can contact the manufacturers to get compensation.



Village: Rooi

Producers' Unit: Barwani, Madhya Pradesh

Cluster: Ojhar



For the villagers of Rooi village in the Ojhar cluster, the problem of bills and items sold in the black market may soon be addressed. This is the place where the Producers' Unit called the Nimad Farmers Producer Company has been formed, and has 100 farmers as its members. Lying strategically on the National Highway, this is one of the first villages to have formed the Company.

One of its villagers, and also a member of the Producers' Company, Ramkishore Onkarlal Sahu (*in photo below*), has 10 acres of land, of which he has used six acres to grow better cotton.

"Whereas earlier, I used to get a yield of 24-25 quintals, this year I have got a yield of almost 50-60 quintals from the same land."

True to his claims, the first room of his house, the largest, is covered from floor to ceiling in healthy white cotton balls, the top and bottom of the pile lined with plastic sheets.

"This is only half the produce. The other half is stored in my old house," he says with pride.

Over a cup of tea made by his daughter, Kiran, who is about to be married soon, he shares that by the formation of the farmers' company, the incidents of seeds and other items sold in black or higher than their printed price may also come down, as then the company could directly source the items from the manufacturers.

His wife Haribai, beamingly serves tea to all present, secure that the family will be able to marry their daughter in a style befitting the family.



Ghanshyam Durbar has 8.2 acres of farmland, of which he is using 1.5 acres to grow a rain-fed cotton crop.

"I learned the advantage of buying seeds from registered companies, with a bill. I bought seeds at Rs. 100 less than the market price. I also learnt that some ideas we had about good seeds and average seeds were in fact myths."

Elaborating, he explains, "We used to buy seeds on hearing of other farmers' success stories. A certain seed variety, Rashi-2 was in great demand, as it had proven to give a great crop to some farmers earlier. As a result, Rashi-2 seeds were not available, and were being sold in the black market. I learnt at the BCI meetings that due to differences in soil conditions, etc., different seed varieties could prove good for different farmers. If one used good techniques, other varieties could also prove effective. So, I purchased a seed variety called Vikram-5, and got good results."



Parvati Bai Sahu shares, "I also learnt which pesticides were banned by the government. I grew 'arandi' (castor) *(in the photo)* and 'genda' (marigold) as border crops, which got me good returns, besides protecting my cotton crop."

Village: Bajatta

Producers' Unit: Barwani, Madhya Pradesh

Cluster: Rajpur

In this village, it is easy to remember names, as its entire inhabitants share a common surname: "Jamre."



It is the festival of 'Gyaaras', or the eleventh day after Diwali – festival of lights ('gyara' in Hindi means eleven) when the Gods wake up (this day is celebrated as "small" Diwali in many parts of India). Women in a festive mood and in brightly coloured synthetic saris walk in twos and threes into the verandah of Manohar and Gyarsibai, to narrate their experiences over the past year and a half of being a part of the BCI.

On hearing the young Kalabai speak, it is now difficult to imagine that she was a daily wage earner, with no land

of her own, as recently as 2008. She smiles confidently as she talks of her journey from being a landless labourer to a landowner.

“I was helped by ASA (Action for Social Advancement) via a microfinance scheme, through which I was able to buy my first piece of land and dig a well on it. I now have 2.5 acres of land.

A year ago, when ASA approached my village again, this time with the BCI, I did not think twice and joined in.”

This was one village where it was decided to have a “women only” learning group. Kalabai (*on left*), with her *joie de vivre*, pleasant and positive attitude, was able to draw in many other women.



Over time, this proved to be one of the most proactive learning groups.

“Even after the field staff leaves, I sit for half an hour more with the women, to revise the learnings so that everyone is able to understand everything clearly and there is no confusion.”

Later, as she walks through a partially withered cotton field belonging to her neighbour, she shares that her fields too looked like this before the well had been dug. She proudly displays the border crop of castor (‘arandi’ in the local language) growing tall on the edges of the cotton field.

“During our training, we were told to grow this. Now insects come and eat this first,” holding out a large castor leaf riddled with tiny holes (*in the photo*), “and our cotton is saved. We also get an extra income from it. I had also grown ‘genda’ (marigold) as a border crop, which I harvested recently, just in time for Diwali (marigolds are considered auspicious by Hindus and used extensively by worshippers during the Diwali festival).”



Meanwhile, Kalabai’s husband Totaram fetches a yellow sticker card (*on left*) covered with mosquitoes and flies that get attracted to its bright colour, and get stuck to the adhesive on the card. He maintains a distance from the group, and is happy to let Kalabai do the talking. His smile tells all, as she shares how much money they have saved using the techniques explained to them by the ASA staff.



“Using techniques like these has helped us save almost Rs. 1500 to Rs. 2000 on pesticides.”

As she holds out a fat healthy cotton ball (*on left*) for closer inspection, she says, “We were taught how to spray pesticides properly, from bottom up. Earlier we used to just spray indiscriminately, over the top, regardless of which direction the wind was blowing. The pesticide used to stay on the top portion of the plant, and not reach the bottom, where the insects used to hide. Also, all insects got killed, regardless of whether they were helpful or harmful.



Now, because of the border crop, we spray less, and that too keeping in mind the direction of the wind, and from bottom up.”

“Once, when the rain water had washed cow excreta into a ditch, I filled up buckets of it, and poured them into the furrows of my cotton field.”

At the moment, the women are heavily dependent on group member Mamta (*in photo with her child*), a graduate, who readily reads out the wall paintings listing dos and don'ts for different processes to other women, fills up their notebooks that keep a record of their meetings and other details. However, Mamta is soon to leave.

Ranjana Jamre's father, Rokriya Jamre, is the Sarpanch of Bajatta. He owns four acres of land, of which 3.5 acres is being used by him to grow better cotton.

Ranjana (*on left*) is a Bachelor of Engineering from Rajpur, and plans to do her M. Tech from an IIT (Indian Institute of Technology).



Janki Devi is Kalabai's neighbour. At the crucial time of planting, she suffered a fracture of the shin, and had to be hospitalised. With her husband having deserted her and in-laws too old to help, there was no one to plant the cotton seeds, and she missed out on a good crop, which would have helped her support her two sons. Seeing how others have benefited from the BCI trainings and produced healthy crops, she is determined to grow cotton the better way this season.



Village: Regwan

Producers' Unit: Khargone, Madhya Pradesh

Cluster: Kasarwad



Jagdish Patel (*wearing a white pagri*), who owns around two acres of land, has translated his new found knowledge from the BCI trainings into an increase in the production of cotton.

"Before I attended the trainings, I used to buy almost eight packets of any kind of cotton seeds, scatter them indiscriminately around the field, unmindful of how close or how far they would grow. After I became associated with the programme, I learnt that the kind of seeds one buys is important, and planting them at specified distances is important for them to grow properly."

"Watering the crop was done in the same manner. Since we get electricity at specified times once in a couple of days, the idea would be to pump in as much water as possible, as I didn't know when the crop could be watered again. I learnt how too much water was harming the crop, and immediately moderated it. The result is that whereas before, in a span of five months I was able to grow 7-9 quintals of cotton, now in the same time span, I have grown almost 20 quintals."

Ramesh Patel (*in photo with family*) owns two acres of land. He speaks of using more organic manure now as compared to earlier.

"At the meetings, I was taught how to prepare organic manure, using cow's urine, fermented buttermilk or 'neem' oil. I left five litres buttermilk to ferment for around 8 to 10 days on the roof of my house. I added cow's urine to it. From this mixture, I added around 200 ml (2 glasses) to 15 litres of water, and used it to spray my cotton crop. By doing this, I did not kill any insects, as they simply went away, not liking the bitter taste coating the leaves, and managed to save the friendly insects too."



Ramesh also speaks of the amount of manure he was using, and the indiscriminate use of pesticides. "I would just buy manure, and in one go, use all of it. Now I know that we should use it sparingly, and make little troughs around the plant, and deposit the manure there. I have also learnt that there are specific pesticides for specific crops. And now, I mostly spray just the border crops, saving the cotton crop."

This Diwali was a special one for Ramesh, as he was able to gift his wife a nose ring, something he had been longing to do but was unable to, for many years. He remembers a time not too long ago, when, “Everything from clothes to groceries was on credit. Now that kind of credit has stopped completely. I now plan to take a loan from the Committee, for a drip irrigation system.”

Gajanand (on left), who owns 2.5 acres of land, shares that earlier he always suffered losses.



“I used non Bt cotton, which attracted more insects and diseases and used more synthetic manure instead of natural manure. As all this was more expensive, I took loans from the local moneylender. Everything was on credit – seeds, pesticides etc. Moreover, the shopkeeper sold everything to me at rates much higher than the printed price because I could not pay cash. Since I suffered losses every year, the interest on these loans grew every year.

Now, after having learnt about what seeds to buy, how to treat them, how to use border crops, and lesser use of pesticides, the produce has improved, grown and so have the earnings.”

Gajanand shared a simple example: “When the seeds are soaked in “trichoderma” or what we are taught to remember as “kai ko darna” (Hindi for “why be afraid”), kept in the cattle shed and rolled on the ground there, they remain healthy and can fight off infection for the first one and a half months, which are very crucial for it.”

Resource persons and specialists at the meeting also helped the knowledge of the farmers grow. Prof. N. K. Tambe, a research scientist and a resource person for the BCI, helped Gajanand overcome a problem with his cotton plants.

“My plants were growing too tall. They were above picking height, and continuing to grow taller. One cannot expect good quality cotton from such plants. Prof. Tambe taught me how to de-top the plants, so that they stop growing vertically, and spread out laterally.”

Bhagwant Khide (on right), who owns 2.5 acres of land earlier, said, “I used nearly four sacks of urea as



fertiliser earlier. Now I use one-and-a-half sacks, to which I add neem oil. This makes the mixture sticky, which insects find too bitter to eat. This also does not get washed away by rain water.”

Bhagwant has two sons studying in Engineering Colleges, one in Mandleshwar, and the other in Indore.

“Before coming into contact with BCI, my children had neither seen the insides of a private school, nor taken tuitions. Whereas earlier, I would make 25 paise on a rupee, now I am making 75 paise on it. Each house now boasts of a motorcycle.”

“While one farmer bought a pressure cooker for his wife for Diwali, and another bought a steel container for keeping curd, I bought “earrings of nine grams gold for my wife. I also plan to renovate my house with concrete, and hope to earn around Rs. 100,000 from the better cotton I grow.”

On Future Plans

Almost all the villagers of Jharolimal, Bajatta, Regwan and Rooi shared that one of their foremost plans is to introduce drip irrigation from the next season onwards. Now with experts to give them technical advice, and the Indian Government giving a subsidy to farmers of almost 70 percent, it has become easier to acquire and install.



Badrilal Yadav from Jharolimal village points out to the drip irrigation mechanism (*in photo on left*), which he has assembled himself, and which irrigates eight acres of his farm.

“Now even if the government gives me 2-3 hours of electricity in a couple of days, it is sufficient.”

Bhavesi Sanchar Rajput from the same village has 25 bighas (around 10 acres) of land, out of which he grows cotton on 10 bighas (around 4 acres). Since water is a problem in the village, most farmers grow a rain-fed crop.

Bhavesi shares, “Because of the rain, four bighas (1.6 acres) of my land is unusable, as it has a mixed soil, with some parts of it being too heavy, and some parts being too porous. For the next season, I plan to install a drip irrigation system, using the government’s subsidy card, which can regulate the amount of water being fed to the plants. It will cost me around Rs. 37,000.”

Mangal Singh Vaskale, also from Jharolimal village, owns 12 bighas (around 4.8 acres), which is not irrigated, and he depends on a rain-fed crop of cotton.

"I can recover the cost of installing a drip irrigation system, and pay off the loan next season, which I could never have done earlier. I may earn a lesser profit however."

Ramkishore Onkarlal Sahu from Rooi village is holding onto his cotton produce for a better price. The current rates are hovering around Rs. 4500 per quintal.

As the young Kalabai (*in photo on right with husband Totaram*) deftly peels green 'tur dal' (pigeon pea) pods and hands over the seeds to the visitors to eat, she shares her future plans, "I have four children, two daughters aged 16 and 14 years, and two sons aged 12 and 10 years respectively. All four of them are studying outside the village in nearby towns. I plan to use the extra money for their educational and hostel needs."



Pointing to the tin roof 'kutchra' (temporary) structure of her house, she adds that she has bought some land where she plans to build a new 'pukka' (permanent) house.



Rampyari and her husband Jagdish (*on left*), also from Bajatta, own 6-7 acres of land, of which two acres is being used to grow better cotton. Rampyari carefully listens to everything she learns at the meetings, and hopes to implement what she hears, but one big problem is thwarting her plans. There is no water source on their land. They have to depend on a rain-fed crop. They are awaiting help in acquiring a drip irrigation system in the next season.

The restriction of no child labour has not posed a problem so far for the villagers associated with BCI.

In the words of young Kalabai from Bajatta village, "We work in each other's farms and help out." The villagers are aware of the criteria regarding the use of child labour as a part of the BCI, and they are keen to avoid missing out on the criteria that prevents their cotton from being 'better cotton.'

Expectations from ASA and BCI

With the success of the Better Cotton Initiative, the expectations of the villagers from ASA and the BCI programme have gone up.

Kailash Patel, from Regwan village, who has a three acre farm, expects the right kind of seeds for the correct price to be made available to all the farmers.

“Many a times, when it is time to put fertilisers in the fields, we find that is in short supply, unavailable, or available in the black market at high prices. We want the programme to help us overcome this problem.”

“The most acute problem is that of obtaining urea. The government rate is specified at Rs. 285 per sack, whereas it is available in the market for Rs. 500, Rs. 600, Rs. 730 etc.”

Khoti Dada, an old man from the same village, shares, “Sometimes, the shopkeeper says, we will give it to you in the night, don’t tell anyone.”



A common refrain amongst farmers across villages is the lack of timely soil testing.

Along with Kailash Patel from Regwan village, Badrilal Yadav from Jharolimal also feels that, “The facility of soil testing is too far, and does not happen in time, with many samples results still awaited, despite having sent them to the district testing centre months ago.”

Sanjay Patel, also from Regwan, feels that the meetings, though helpful, are difficult to make time for.

“Since the evaluation of our cotton as better cotton makes it imperative for 80 percent of us to be present, most of us try and make it.”

Conclusion

With one cycle complete, and the other begun, farmers have already seen the range of possibilities that are created when a process that works with the environment, not against it, and is ultimately financially viable too, is followed. They have seen the power of knowledge and working collectively, and are already scientists in the making. Though there are many hurdles to be crossed, (“debt is a reality that all farmers live with”- Jagdish Patel from Regwan), there is also an air of confidence and hope that is difficult to miss.



About Better Cotton Initiative (BCI)

www.bettercotton.org

The Better Cotton Initiative (BCI), is a not for profit membership association, under the Swiss law, is established to define a new type of cotton commodity and aims to promote measurable improvements in the key environmental and social impacts of cotton cultivation worldwide to make it more sustainable (economically, environmentally, and socially). Sustainable cotton production ensures that the agricultural activities do not have any harmful effects on nature and on people and that cotton farmers/farm workers and their families can decently live from the income of their work. The most relevant issues in conflict with sustainable cotton production are presently: high levels of pesticide use, overuse of water resources, poor soil management, poor working conditions (including child and bonded labour) and poor access to finance

BCI endeavours to initiate global change in the mass market, with long-term benefits for the environment, farmers and other people dependent on cotton for their livelihood. 'Better Cotton' is being defined through a collaborative multi stakeholder approach, involving a wide range of players from farmers and their representatives along the cotton value chain to brands and retailers as well as civil society and international organisations.

The BCI is currently funded by its Members, the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) and the Better Cotton Fast Tract Programme (BCFTP).

Solidaridad

About Solidaridad

www.solidaridad.nl

Solidaridad, based in the Netherlands, was established in 1969. In 2008, an organizational change was initiated. Solidaridad started to build up a global network with 9 regional expertise centres. It is an international network organisation with more than 20 years of experience in creating fair and sustainable supply chains from producer to consumer. Solidaridad believes that fair and sustainable trade reduces poverty and helps to preserve people's environment. In India, it is endorsed by BCI as Implementing Partner with its cotton solutions network.

Objectives

- Strengthening producer organizations and civil society organizations in developing countries that are working on the sustainable development of their economy.
- Involving companies, financial institutions and investors in developing supply chains with added value for producers, created through fair trade and corporate social responsibility.
- Creating a support base for sustainable economic development in society, and among citizens and consumers in particular, through providing information. This involves raising awareness and changing behaviour in order to create new economic, political and cultural relations in both developing and developed countries.



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