

CASE STUDY

Tanzanian cotton producers aim for 100% pure



New opportunities are opening up for cotton producers in the United Republic of Tanzania. As a result of ITC support, they are paying more attention to quality control, expanding their markets, increasing sales and establishing long-term relationships with buyers in Asia. ITC is working with Tanzanian cotton producers and cotton-consuming spinning mills in Bangladesh to improve the quality of Tanzanian cotton and boost its reputation.

Cotton is a major source of income in many African countries, but it often fetches below market price or is rejected by spinners because it is not pure enough. Cotton in the United Republic of Tanzania is hand-picked and provides an income for about 40% of the population. Greater emphasis on cleaning up the cotton production process, from picking to packing, has already produced impressive results for Tanzanian producers, with some reducing contamination by more than 60%.



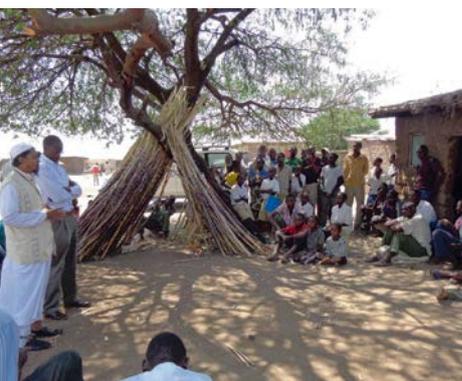
OPTIMIZING THE VALUE OF PRODUCTION

'Cotton with fewer contaminants is more competitive in global markets, resulting in higher incomes for producers,' said Matthias Knappe, ITC Programme Manager, Cotton, Textiles and Clothing. 'Developing methods and incentives to produce uncontaminated cotton protects growers against price discounts and enables spinners to optimize the value of their production. ITC's partnership approach ensures better quality cotton for Bangladeshi spinners and a guaranteed market with better prices for Tanzanian producers.'

In 2013, ITC assisted in training 1,100 Tanzanian cotton farmers and gin operators to reduce contamination with the help of experts from Square Textiles and Viyellatex, two Bangladeshi spinning mills. The project aims to boost the competitiveness of African cotton exporters and establish stronger links with importers, particularly in Asia.

'Contaminated cotton leads to disturbances in the production line, production losses, an increase in wastage and decreased productivity,' said Shohel Anwar, Assistant General Manager of Quality Assurance at Square Textiles, which imports 8%–10% of its cotton supplies from Africa.

Contaminated cotton comes at a price for spinners, requiring additional labour and investment in expensive cleaning machines. It creeps into raw cotton when it is harvested, gathered, wrapped, stored, loaded and transported. Contamination includes human and animal hair, bird feathers, jute threads and rope, plastic strings, cable, wire, nuts, bolts and metal, chocolate, biscuit and sweet wrappers, and pieces of clothing and coloured fibres.



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Shohel Anwar, Assistant General Manager,
Square Textiles, Bangladesh

Polypropylene is one of the main contaminants. ‘Farmers and ginners use huge quantities of polypropylene bags, even fertilizer bags, since those are available,’ Anwar explained. ‘But polypropylene bags and strings easily get into the fresh cotton. White polypropylene is difficult to sort from cotton because it is the same colour. Even machines cannot detect it.’

INCREASING QUALITY

As a result of ITC’s project, Tanzanian ginners have begun reducing contamination levels and hold regular inspections. In some cases, polypropylene is banned on the factory floor, the number of workers picking seed-cotton contaminations has increased and regular inspections of finished lint bales determine contamination levels.

Afrisian Ginning Ltd and SM Holding have implemented changes that have reduced the amount of contaminants by up to 63%. Long-term changes include introducing a quality assurance system with qualified staff to control contamination levels at the ginning factory.

Since the ITC training, 20 gineries out of 22 have introduced new quality measures such as sorting of contaminants at the feeding point and platform for roller gins; 12 have switched to cotton packing material instead of jute; two gineries are opening bales to count contaminants and report that the number of contaminants has fallen from 42 to four; and five have provided uniforms to employees.

The financial benefits are already evident. Tanzanian ginners have sold 4,500 bales to Bangladeshi spinners. The ginners, who operate gins in Malawi, also sold 1,500 bales of Malawian cotton. Bangladeshi spinners are now interested in offering additional training sessions and increasing the amount of cotton they buy from African ginners.

ITC is expanding the project to Eastern and Southern Africa and is identifying additional interested spinning factories.

