NEW IDEAS DRIVE PROGRESS

Almost 200 producers, manufacturers, brands, retailers, and support organizations came together in Mumbai to share news and views on organic cotton. The sheer size of the gathering and the energy on the day left no doubt in our minds that the desire to grow a robust and resilient organic cotton market is greater than ever. It was pleasing to see the value the OCRT provides the community.

“Having so many stakeholders from across the supply chain together in one place is what makes the OCRT so unique, and the perfect opportunity for inspiring change and collective action.”

-Liesl Truscott, European Director and coordinator of the OCRT

To see the OCRT Summary Animation click here.
To download the OCRT graphic recording click here.
To download the slides from the day click here.
To visit the website, click here.

MORNING ADDRESSES

VISIONS FOR SUCCESS

The day flowed smoothly, with Simon Cooper, Partner in Change Agency, acting as OCRT Master of Ceremonies. We opened with two morning addresses. First, Punit Lalbhai, Executive Director at Arvind, shared his vision for success followed by Sally Uren, CEO at Forum for the Future, who got us thinking systematically and collaboratively about creating a better future.

Morning address by Punit Lalbhai, ED of Arvind Limited.

Morning address by Sally Uren, CEO, Forum for the Future.
INVESTING IN ORGANIC FOR A DIVERSE, RESILIENT & REWARDING FUTURE

Then followed a Q&A with experts and investors, who excited us with news of recent investment in organic cotton from India to Pakistan to China. Alongside the new investors were pioneers in organic from Helvetas and bioRe, who continue to show us how innovation goes hand-in-hand with bold and visionary “early adoption” of ideas.

Top Recommendations:

1. **PROVIDE ENABLERS** such as Farmer Field Schools, demonstration plots, input access and certification, and Women’s Open Schools.
2. **STRENGTHEN WHOLE COMMUNITIES** to facilitate access to extension services, technology, farming inputs and markets.
3. **INCLUDE THE IN-TRANSITION YEARS** in investment programs to support farmers during the transition to organic.
4. **GO BEYOND THE COMMODITY** and approach the farm as an agro-ecological system producing food and fiber, conserving natural resources, biodiversity and ecosystem services.
5. **BUILD PARTNERSHIPS** to include government incentives and market mechanisms to achieve product delivery.
6. **FARMER-FIRST** models rooted in transparency, trust, and commitment.
OPEN SPACE
OPENING UP FOR LEARNING AND REFLECTION

The ethos of the OCRT is to allow as much self-organized learning as possible. This year’s “Open Space” provided a “marketplace of enquiry, reflection and learning, to bring out the best of both individuals and the whole.” Topics under discussion included: Tackling the roots of integrity issues; Examining the business case for producers; Market movements and opportunities; and The new Sustainable Development Goals.

WHAT IS OPEN SPACE?

"It is a self-organizing practice of inner discipline and collective activity, which releases the inherent creativity and leadership in people. By inviting people to take responsibility for what they care about, Open Space establishes a marketplace of inquiry, reflection and learning, bringing out the best in both individuals and the whole.

-Anne Stadler, OpenSpaceWorld

1. Tackling the Roots of Integrity Issues - Collective Vision:

- COMMON UNDERSTANDING - Important to understand what integrity means to everybody else.
- TRUST - To achieve integrity a culture of trust needs to be nurtured.
- COMMUNICATION - Open communication is vital to address underlying causes of deviations from integrity.
- TRAINING - Supply chain actors need to be equipped with the tools for integrating and managing integrity.
- FINANCING - Pressure to cut corners can lead to integrity being compromised - it must be factored into a true cost business model.
2. Examining the Business Case for Producers - Collective Vision:

- COMMITMENT - Long-term commitments from brands and retailers.
- PRICING - Explore new pricing models such as de-coupling prices from the commodity market.
- QUALITY - Work together to ensure fiber performance (quality, characteristics etc.) matches commercial and technical requirements.
- FINANCING - Work to coordinate product and financial flows to reduce producer vulnerability and leverage access to affordable financing.

3. Market Movements and Opportunities - Collective Vision:

- EFFICIENCIES – Employ appropriate technology to increase efficiencies and remove waste.
- PRICING – Go deep into supply networks to resolve pricing issues.
- EDUCATION – Curriculums that influence and encourage responsible and ethical behavior (citizenship).
- INTEGRITY – Every actor in the supply chain must take responsibility.

4. The New SDGs – What They Mean for Cotton Communities - Collective Vision:

- COLLECTIVE ACTION - We need to act! It must be precise and inclusive – governments and businesses talking to each other.
- TRADE not aid!
- METRICS THAT MATTER – Incentivize companies to set their own KPIs to deliver SDGs.
- BUILD A PLATFORM - Find the right forum such as the World Economic Forum to bring governments and businesses together to find solutions (incentives, policies) to work together to deliver SDGs.
Lunchtime’s “Eat & Greet” provided an extensive menu of topics. “Diners” were encouraged to graze lightly or dig heartily where appetite dictated! Topics included:

1. Chetna Coalition
   Rhett Godfrey, Loomstate

2. Climate Issues in Agriculture
   Arun Ambatipudi, Chetna Organic

3. Consumer Engagement Around Organic Cotton
   Marci Zaroff, Under the Canopy / Portico Brands

4. Fairtrade & Organic – Complementary Approach to Address Industry Concerns
   Anup Kr Singh, Fairtrade International

5. Future of Farmers’ Associations in Organic Agriculture
   Jens Soth, HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation

   Andrea Bischof, HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation

7. Relevance of Supply Chain Certifications at Later Stages of Production
   Sumit Gupta, Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS)

8. The POC (Pre Organic Cotton) Program
   Michiko Komatsu, kurkku

9. Working Towards a Living Wage in CMT Units
   Maeve Wadge, Sourcing Sustainably

10. Conservation Through Cotton
    Ipshita Sinha, C&A Foundation

11. The Appachi Eco-Logic Cotton Project
    Mani Chinnaswamy, Appachi Eco-Logic

12. Update on Organic Cotton in China
    Tong Yeung, Mecilla and Allen You, TE

13. Insight into the Indian Organic & Fair Cotton Secretariat (OFCS)
    Prabha Nagarajan, TE/ OFCS

14. “Wild Card” - Water
    Chamindu Rajapakse, Water Resources Group

15. “Wild Card” – Pricing Strategy and Brand Values
    Prama Bhardwaj, Mantis World

A delegate captures their key “take-away” messages during the Eat & Greet Lunch Table Discussions.

At Andrea Bischof’s “Global Organic Cotton Community Platform” Table.
Below are some snippets from the lunch table discussion hosts:

“\"We had a very interesting discussion…the biggest issues were around defining exactly what a living wage is in different regions, and being able to ensure long term sustainability in it being paid to garment workers.\"

-Maeve Wadge, Sourcing Sustainably

“\"We need a cohesive campaign from TE brands with infographics, social media engagement and a toolkit so we are all sending the same messaging, maybe even a global twitter party and a Facebook group to share our global efforts.\"

-Marci Zaroff, Under The Canopy/ Portico Brands

The OFCS is exploring the non Bt seed shortage and ramifications on farmers choices and especially on Integrity. The lunch table discussion was good with guests asking lots of questions.

-Prabha Nagarajan, TE/ OFCS

Brands wanted to hear about the current regulations on labeling in China, e.g, how other brands/retailers are doing it and what to expect in the future. This is a key area of concern for brands selling in China.

-Tong Yeung, Mecilla

Different programs need to support each other in promoting the 'habit' of installing traceability systems in companies at later stages of production/distribution, including non-retail brands.

-Sumit Gupta, GOTS
After lunch, the three task force “breakthrough” meetings were run concurrently. The OCRT’s longstanding task forces on Seed & Soils, Business Models, and Consumer Engagement have steadily been building over time. Task force meetings allowed for strategic conversations to take place, which help each task force’s advisory group plan and prioritize action. The OCRT in-person meeting provides the opportunity for priorities to be shared, a co-created strategy to be developed, and areas to focus funding - so that action can be taken.

**BREAKTHROUGHS IN SEED, BUSINESS MODELS & CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT**

**TASK FORCES**

**TASK FORCE ACTION POINTS: Seed & Soils**

- Promote the work of the Organic & Fair Cotton Secretariat (OFCS) in India.
- Advocate for Seed Conservation Parks – partnerships between Breeding Institutes, Government, and the private sector including farmers.
- Find partners and raise funds for seed breeding programs that prioritize open-pollinated varieties with attributes for pest resistance and that thrive in “low-input” e.g. organic conditions.
- Take learnings from India’s experience (methodologies, participatory breeding programs, etc.) and new ways of bringing seed stakeholders together to raise awareness and find solutions collaboratively. Share good practice and case studies with stakeholders in other countries who are coming up against similar issues.
- Develop a protocol or best practice for GMO testing.
**TASK FORCE ACTION POINTS: Consumer Engagement**

- Translate the new “aboutorganiccotton.org” microsite into German, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, and French.
- Develop Media “Infosheet” and combine with a Marketing Toolkit to be released via social media.
- Produce educational tools such as powerpoints presentations for delivering training and presentations.
- Create additional video links such as The True Cost and Behind The Label.
- Connect companies to the microsite and create two-way link to site.
- Use the microsite to encourage “co-creation” between stakeholders.

**TASK FORCE ACTION POINTS: Business Models**

- Prepare case studies of the new business models currently under development, being piloted or implemented.
- Call for business leadership – especially at the C-suite level.
- Continue to work on supply chain linkages, towards full integration, for maximizing shared value and rewards, responsibility, and risk sharing.
- Create an environment (the OCRT does this!) to mobilize coalitions, pre-competitive collective action. “GO FURTHER TOGETHER!”

La Rhea Pepper introducing aboutorganiccotton.org and inviting suggestions during the Consumer Engagement Task Force Meeting.

Heinrich Schultz and Alison Ward discussing approaches and opportunities during the Business Models Task Force Meeting.

Nicole Bassett, prAna, contributes to the discussion during the Consumer Engagement Task Force Meeting.

Heinrich Schultz listening to questions posed by the group.
The finale of the day was the launch of the new Innovation Lab, developed in collaboration with Change Agency and sponsored by Luminous Energy. Eight shortlisted applicants pitched their ideas and the winning proposal, as decided by our judging panel (or “Dragons” for anyone familiar with the TV show “Dragons Den”!), received the OCRT Innovation Award for 2015 along with a cash prize of $3,000 to put towards their project or donate to a favorite cause.

Congratulations to all finalists (below), our runner-up Sreeranga Rajan, Dibella and our winner Avinash Karmarkar from Pratibha!

1. **Bio Farmer – Markus Brauchli:**
   To tackle the issue of contamination, Bio Farmer, in collaboration with its long-term commercial partners Paul Reinhart AG and Elmer & Zweifel GmbH (Cotonea), came up with a comprehensive and innovative quality management (QM) strategy along the entire processing chain.

2. **Bio-Kishovarz – Sherzod Abdurakhmanov (presented by Markus Brauchli):**
   Bio-Kishovarz aims to improve livelihoods of cotton growing farmers through introduction of certified organic farming.

3. **bioRe – Vivek Rawal:**
   bioRe is setting up a non-GM cottonseed research, production, and promotion enterprise, which is ready to provide a seed solution to organic farmers in India.

4. **The Caring Cotton – Rubina Ansari:**
   Ruby proposed a “hands-on” learning center and experimental laboratory in Auroville, India, focused on the use of organic cotton and natural dyes.

5. **Dibella – Sreeranga Rajan:**
   Inspired by the urgent need to find a solution for the waste generated in factory cutting floor and in farm yards, Dibella teamed up with PSP India to create the world’s most socially, environmentally and economically competitive packaging products.

6. **VOSC/ Pratibha Syntex – Avinash Karmarkar:**
   Over the next five years, Pratibha plans to work with 300 villages to create an awakened ‘scientist’ in each farmer who, through participatory methods, will find his or her own solutions to their problems, thereby resulting in continuous, sustainable and holistic growth.

7. **REMATRAC-Bio – Elie Dolo and Bagna Traore:**
   The REMATRAC-Bio network sells artisanal handicraft textile products in domestic and international markets. The network is involved in several fair exhibitions and meetings for the promotion of organic cotton in the country and outside, and runs a project to improve the quality of local organic textile products.

8. **Sustainable Fashion Education in China – Tong Yeung:**
   Since China is such a significant player in the textiles industry, this project aims to bring together key stakeholders, including Chinese fashion academics and professionals, to review current practices and challenges in integrating sustainability into the fashion curriculum.
We all appreciate your efforts. I am sure that in coming times this award will really motivate producers and nurture innovations for the benefit of all. Congratulations to entire team for all great efforts.

-Avinash Karmarka, Vashuda Organics/Pratibha Syntex (Winner)

In next five years, Pratibha plans to connect 300 villages to create an awakened ‘scientist’ in each farmer. Through participatory methods, the program aims to encourage solutions that are generated from within the community. Skill development projects in organic cotton farming are also on the anvil. This will result in continuous improvements in agriculture, rapid adoption of sustainable means and holistic growth of the community.

We are proactively seeking strategic alliances with private and public, for-profit and nonprofit organizations that are committed to establish sustainable farming communities by democratizing agriculture and developing ‘farmer scientists.

-Shreyaskar Chaudhary, MD — Pratibha Syntex
The Innovation lab is a fantastic initiative to foster innovation and entrepreneurship in sustainable textiles and we are proud to have participated and won second prize. There is never a better time for this initiative than now as there is real momentum across various stakeholders who are finding creative ways of reducing the negative impact on natural resources and building a sustainable industry. It’s great that the Innovation lab brings them together and provides platform to share and promote the idea with like-minded businesses. It incentivizes the innovators who, otherwise, are often left on their own.

The format of the innovation lab is quite creative as well and we really enjoyed the process. Great job by Change agency and TE. Already looking forward to next year!

- Sreeranga Rajan (Dibella)

“Innovative ideas” for the Lab going forward:

- Invite feedback to feed into plans for 2016.
- Appoint Innovation Lab Patron.
- Establish first TE “Alumni of Innovators” - TE to set up the Alumni network and platform for sharing ideas.
- At the 2016 OCRT Alumni share updates and progress (either live or via video).
- Video recording the event and sharing on “OCRT Innovation Lab Alumni TV”.

“Once Upon a Doug” is a project set up to provide women cotton farmers with a second income by making handmade, cloud-shaped fashion accessories out of recycled fabrics.
CLOSING ADDRESS

Martin Hill from Fairtrade International left us inspired and united at the end of a full and fast-paced day.

Textile Exchange expresses a HUGE thank you to all our thought-starters, task force leaders, judges, panelists, OCRT partners, supporters, and friends: Thanks to all, the whole of the OCRT is greater than the sum of its parts!

“Just want to say thanks for a fantastic OCRT. I really enjoyed being a part of it!

-Maeve Wadge, Director, Sourcing Sustainably

“Thanks to the TE team and Simon for organizing an excellent OCRT! A pleasure and privilege to be involved with such a great group of people!

-Dr. Helen Crowley, Head of Sustainable Sourcing Innovation, Kering

“It was a pleasure meeting you at the OCRT, Textile Exchange. It was one of the better-managed events I have attended.

-Yogesh Gaikwad, Business Manager, Society of Dyers and Colorists

“I want to take this opportunity to thank you from the bottom of my heart, to express my gratitude for the kind of platform that TE has offered. I have made many friends as a result of the program. Overall, the event was a grand success that allowed the participants to have their say and contribute to issues that really matter for the whole sustainability movement.

-Mani Chinnaswamy, Managing Partner, Appachi Eco-Logic

“Thanks Liesl & team TE for a fabulous conference and OCRT! Onward & upward...

-Marci Zaroff, founder and President, Under the Canopy

“Thanks for the innovation lab opportunity. We are really proud to have participated in it (and having won the runner-up of course!) Innovations are far and few between in sustainable textiles and it’s really fantastic that your Innovation Lab brings them together and provides a platform to share and promote ideas with like minded businesses. It incentivizes the innovators who, otherwise, often are left on their own. I think this is a perfect initiative for TE – you are the torch bearer of sustainable textiles.

-Sreeranga Rajan, Dibella
Textile Exchange inspires and equips people to accelerate sustainable practices in the textile value chain. We focus on minimizing the harmful impacts and maximizing the positive effects of the global textile industry. Our signature program focuses on organic cotton value chains; improving lives for farmers, stimulating markets, and supporting best practice.

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