

Session 2 - Indian Cotton 2021 and Beyond - How to Increase Cotton Productivity / Yield in India

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Good Morning to All of You!

At the outset, I would like to congratulate the Cotton Association of India (CAI) for organising this cotton workshop on the occasion of World Cotton Day.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to CAI for inviting me to this session titled “Indian Cotton 2021 And Beyond - How to Increase Cotton Productivity / Yield in India” and share my thoughts on the same.

Today is the 2nd anniversary of World Cotton Day which we celebrate to recognize the importance of Cotton as a global commodity that is being grown in over 75 countries across the five continents and also to highlight its central role in job creation and maintaining economic stability in several least-developed countries.

Indian cotton textile industry is more than 5000 years old and its cultivation plays a major role in sustaining the livelihood of an estimated 6.5 million cotton farmers and several million people engaged in related activities such as cotton processing and trade, thus, making Cotton the backbone of the Indian economy.

Indian cotton sector has a presence in the entire value chain (farm to fashion) and India is capable of producing all types and varieties of cotton suitable to spin yarns from 2s to 200s.

India has the highest acreage of cotton cultivation in the world and has a share of about 25% in global production of cotton.

Though India is self-sufficient in terms of cotton availability for domestic industry, yet its cotton sector is facing issues of low yield and high contamination. While the National average yields in countries like Australia, China, Mexico, and Brazil have been more than 1500 kg lint per hectare in recent years, India’s cotton yield is stagnated at around 450 kgs of lint per hectare.

Cotton cultivation in India follows a different pattern from the rest of the world which is majorly due to one policy factor – Hybrid cotton. While India is now saturated with hybrid cotton, the rest of the world did not adopt the concept of hybrid cotton.

Apart from this, the Indian cotton sector faces certain other challenges like:

High moisture content in seed cotton.

No bale tagging system - cotton statistics not updated.

Illegal deployment of HT variety of cotton.

Manual plucking of cotton.

Price volatility.

Doubling of usage of the insecticide and fertilizers mainly after 2006.

Pink bollworm developed resistance to Bollgard-II only in India just in 4-5 years while in other countries even after 16 years of exposure to Bt cotton, there is no resistance to Bollgard II yet.

These challenges are a cause of worry as they affect cotton availability which directly impacts the output of the cotton value chain: yarn, fabric, and apparel. Therefore, it is important to assess the issues impacting the cotton output and work towards resolving the same.

With a little scope in increasing the cotton acreage further, India needs to seriously introspect and explore ideas to increase cotton yield and reduce contamination.

Each stake holder in the entire cotton value chain should take it as a personal responsibility to work towards improving the cotton yield in India and decreasing cotton contamination and not merely depend on the Government.

Cotton industry should come forward and take various initiatives such as conducting regular awareness programs to educate the farmers about the global best practices like High-Density planting, usage of BT Varieties, precision chemical input management, canopy management, etc. and must motivate the farmers to adopt these practices to cultivate 'more and clean' cotton.

An increase in yield will not be beneficial just for the farmers as they will get higher returns but it will also make the Indian cotton textile industry more competitive as the textile industry will get better quality cotton at more competitive rates.

I am extremely sure that by a concentrated efforts from all the stake holders of cotton value chain, many of the issues of cotton cultivation can be addressed within a short time frame and India can emerge as a global leader in cotton cultivation and global cotton value chain.

I once again thank CAI for organising this significant workshop and inviting me as a speaker for this session.

I wish CAI all the best for their future endeavours and hope that they will organise many more workshops like this in the future which will be useful for the cotton textile value chain.

Thank You