



# Alliance of Cotton & Textile Stakeholders on Regenerative Agriculture (ACRE)



## 1. BACKGROUND

Agriculture remains the backbone of the Indian economy and the highest contributor to workforce in India (over 45%)<sup>1</sup>. However, the traditional focus on production especially through chemical fertilizer and pesticide's use, unchecked use of water and limited consideration for preserving the local ecology have all had negative implications not only on the local environment in terms of the quality of soil, land, water quality, etc. - but also on GHG emissions and widely on public health and community welfare across certain parts of India.

There is consensus within the scientific community that such practices are unsustainable in the long run, and stifle our global commitment on sustainable development, biodiversity and climate change. Therefore, there is a need and perhaps an opportunity to transform the way farming is done in the country. It is well established that adaptation measures can help reduce negative impacts of climate change on agriculture and the ecosystem that supports farming, thereby benefitting the farming community, especially the most vulnerable, and all others dependent on it. According to the IPCC (2019), sustainable agriculture practices that focus on reducing crop emissions; effective livestock management and grazing; sequestering carbon in soils and biomass; among others can contribute towards climate change mitigation by reducing GHG<sup>2</sup>. Various stakeholders across the agriculture sector have heralded *regenerative agriculture* practices as a viable alternative that can help mitigate negative impacts of farming on nature, biodiversity, climate change and communities.

There is renewed interest on natural farming in India, especially with creation of the *National Mission on Natural Farming*<sup>3</sup> – which aims to mainstream natural farming and thereby regenerate natural systems. It is opportune for organisations and professionals working in the agriculture/agri-business sector to consider promoting natural farming given its proven capacity to benefit farmers and to regenerate natural systems.

India is one of the largest producers of cotton in the world accounting for about 22% (5.8 Million Tonnes) of the world cotton production. The total area under cotton cultivation is around 13 lakh hectares<sup>4</sup>. Maharashtra, Gujarat, Telengana, Rajasthan and Karnataka are the leading producers of Cotton in India<sup>5</sup>. Solidaridad has been working with cotton farmers in select districts of Maharashtra – for the promotion and uptake of regenerative agriculture practices. Farmers have responded positively to this initiative, given its aim of preserving nature while also ensuring benefits for the farmers.

As a next step, Solidaridad, regenagri and CRB will engage the wider cotton and textiles sector stakeholders to collaborate and enable uptake of regenerative agriculture across the entire cotton value-chain, starting with Maharashtra and then expanding to other States. The organisations believe, this could be achieved through the development of a cotton and textile value-chain alliance. This note presents an initial idea of the basic contours of such an alliance, for discussions with key stakeholders.

## 2. OVERVIEW

### 2.1 Goal

Stakeholders along the cotton and textile value chain embrace nature -friendly regenerative farming, to benefits farmers, regenerate natural systems and combat climate.

### 2.2 Objectives

- Support scaling-up regenerative agriculture in cotton with the vision of making India the world's biggest producer of regenagri certified cotton
- *Enable collaboration* among cotton and textile value chain actors on regenerative agriculture across various cotton landscapes in India

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.niti.gov.in/sites/default/files/2022-04/Discussion\\_Paper\\_on\\_Workforce\\_05042022.pdf](https://www.niti.gov.in/sites/default/files/2022-04/Discussion_Paper_on_Workforce_05042022.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/4/2022/11/SRCCL\\_Chapter\\_5.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/4/2022/11/SRCCL_Chapter_5.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [http://naturalfarming.dac.gov.in/uploads/Final\\_Guidelines.pdf](http://naturalfarming.dac.gov.in/uploads/Final_Guidelines.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [https://cotcorp.org.in/national\\_cotton.aspx?AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1](https://cotcorp.org.in/national_cotton.aspx?AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1)

<sup>5</sup> <https://cotcorp.org.in/statistics.aspx>

- *Advance tools/mechanism(s)* that balance smallholder benefits with conservation of nature and augment soil health in different agro-climatic regions and landscapes growing cotton in India
- Create awareness amongst national and international *consumers/users to demand* regenerative cotton
- *Document and communicate* success stories on regenerative agriculture in cotton
- *Engage on policy issues* related to regenerative agriculture and natural farming at State and National level
- *Build capacity and expertise* among cotton and textile sector buyers and brands for wider adoption of regenerative practices in cotton and textile industries
- Link cotton farmers practising regenerative agriculture practices to initiatives focused on carbon/climate finance/ biodiversity finance

## 2.3 Outcomes

- *Support is garnered* for regenerative agriculture practices from cotton and textile value chain actors
- Creation of *enabling environment* specifically through - policy measures, appropriate technology, frugal innovations and financial resources
- *Benefits accrue* to farmers practising regenerative agriculture
- *Expertise and capacity built* on regenerative agriculture practices
- Multi- stakeholder and multi-regional strategic partnerships get shaped up

## 3. GOVERNANCE & OPERATIONALISATION

This section provides an idea of the structure, governance and operationalisation of the *Alliance*.

### 3.1 Steering Committee

A Steering Committee will be established that helps in giving direction, advise and support to help establish and then grow this alliance. The steering committee will comprise 7 members to start with and can be expanded to a maximum of 11-13 members. This will include the founding members: - Solidaridad, regenAgri and CRB. Further, the remaining members would be chosen from the cotton and textile value chain.

Members would be selected based on their ability to fulfil the following responsibilities that the Steering Committee is expected to shoulder:

- provide strategic direction
- act as ambassadors of the initiative
- identify strategic partners to consolidate and expand the initiative
- provide resources to scale-up and scale-out the initiative
- promote capacity building activities in their supply/value chain and/or network
- any other role that is deemed crucial to meet the goal and objectives of the platform

### 3.2 Working Groups

The Working Groups will drive implementation of specific activities of the alliance, pursuing the above-mentioned objectives. The following **Working Groups** are proposed in view of the objectives:

- i. Production systems related to natural farming of cotton
- ii. Certification and Continuous improvement
- iii. Technology & Innovations in Value Chain
- iv. Carbon Finance & Carbon Credits
- v. Policy Engagement (State and National)

The Steering Committee can propose new Working Group and/or suggest dissolution of existing one(s).

### 3.3 Members

All relevant cotton sector stakeholders, including but not limited to: Farmer Producers Organisations (FPOs), buyers, manufacturers, brands, industry associations, financial sector actors, scientific organisations, agronomy experts.

The **responsibility** of members, would be to engage themselves in:

- i. raising awareness and capacity/expertise on regenerative agriculture practices in cotton;
- ii. supporting and implementing activities in the cotton and textiles value chain on regenerative agriculture
- iii. widening application of regenerative agriculture across different cotton landscapes
- iv. procuring cotton produced through natural farming (regenerative agriculture)

### 3.4 Secretariat

CRB and Solidaridad will jointly act the Secretariat of this alliance, given both the organisations' experience in conceptualising, developing and managing multi-stakeholder sustainability related alliances.



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