

# Organic cotton products: Global selling reached \$ 5.3 billion in 2010

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Despite the global recession, sale of organic cotton products increased from \$4 billion in 2009 to \$5.3 billion in 2010, thus showing an increase of 32%. In 2011 and 2012, the increase is reported as 24% and 33% respectively, to result in an estimated \$6.0 billion market in 2011 and a \$7.3 billion market in 2012. Most brands and retailers selling organic cotton products remain committed to their sustainability plans and upbeat about market growth, with plans to expand their product lines.

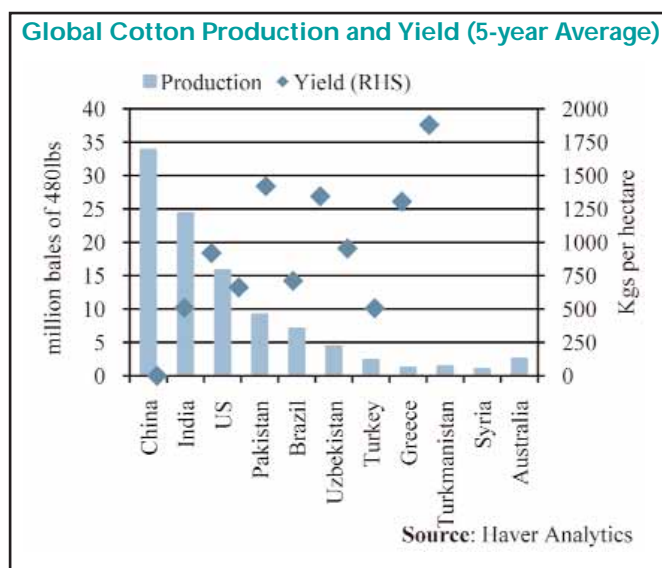
Organic cotton has been gradually gaining popularity in the modern times, since people all over the world are becoming more and more aware of issues, such as global warming, health, pollution and environment protection.

Today, the conventional cotton crop occupies 3% of the world cultivated areas. Nevertheless, it represents 25% of pesticides and 10% of insecticides bought in the world. The conventional cultivation of cotton leads to massive environmental and health problems. Around the world, more toxic insecticides are used on cotton than on any other crop. A sustainable alternative is the certified organic cultivation. Today, the demand of organic cotton product has been increasing day by day all over the world. The farmers may convert their production into a controlled organic cultivation of cotton, as there is a sufficient demand for organic cotton.

Cotton is the most widely used natural-fibre cloth in clothing today. It accounts for almost 50% of the textile market worldwide. It is used to make a number of textile products. These include bath towels and robes, denim, shirts, socks, underwear, T-shirts, bed-sheets, etc. Global production of cotton is given in Table-1.

Country	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
China	37.0	36.7	32.0	30.5
India	24.0	22.6	23.0	25.4
United States	19.2	12.8	12.2	18.1
<b>Pakistan</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>9.6</b>	<b>8.8</b>
Brazil	7.4	5.5	5.5	9.0
Australia	0.6	1.5	1.8	4.2
Uzbekistan	5.4	4.6	3.9	4.1
Turkey	3.1	1.9	1.8	2.1
African Zone	2.3	2.2	2.1	2.1
EU-27	1.7	1.2	1.1	1.1
Turkmenistan	1.3	1.4	1.3	1.6
Greece	1.6	1.2	0.9	0.9
Argentina	0.7	0.6	1.0	1.3
Mexico	0.6	0.6	0.4	0.7
Burkina	0.7	0.9	0.7	0.7
Rest of World	7.8	6.8	5.9	6.1
World Total	119.7	107.1	101.4	115.1

Source: US Cotton Market Monthly Economic Letter October 2011



The fashion industry has an enormous impact on the environment. Many of the clothes we wear today are made from synthetic materials that are made from petrochemicals. The synthetic materials such as nylon and polyester are made from petrochemicals, which are polluting to the environment, causing global warming. They are also non-biodegradable, which means they don't break down easily and so are difficult to dispose. In order to manufacture nylon, nitrous oxide is released as part of the process. Nitrous oxide is a greenhouse gas that is 310 times stronger than carbon dioxide and causes global warming.

In 1998, Nike, one of the largest sports clothing lines in the world, decided to incorporate organic practices. Most of their products contain 3%-5% organic fibres and they also offer a 100% organic line. Nike alone uses nearly 3.0 million pounds of organic cotton per year and other large companies such as Patagonia, Timberland, and Orvis also incorporate organic fibres into their clothing lines. Apparel companies are developing programs that either use 100% organically grown cotton, or blend small percentages of organic cotton with conventional cotton in their products. There are a number of companies driving the expanded use of domestic and international organic cotton.

A wide variety of products made from organically grown cotton is now available: shirts and pants, socks, underwear, skirts and blouses, sheets and pillowcases, towels and bathrobes. The range of styles can be somewhat limited, but new styles are being developed to keep pace with the growing demand for organic cotton clothing. The top ten brands and retailers using organic cotton are Wal-Mart (USA), C&A (Belgium), Nike (USA), H&M (Sweden), Zara (Spain), Anvil (USA), Coop (Switzerland), Pottery Barn (USA), Greensource (USA), and Hess Natur (Germany).

Organic cotton is currently being grown successfully in many countries. Organic cotton grown by farmers worldwide increased from 40,322 tonnes in 2006 to 241,276 tonnes in 2010, grown in 22 countries. According to Organic Cotton Farm and Fiber Report-2010 India, Syria, and Turkey are the leading organic cotton producers in the world. Organic cotton now represents 1.1% of global cotton production. Other leading organic cotton producers, according to rank are Syria, China, Tanzania, United States, Uganda, Peru, Egypt and Burkina Faso.

During 2010, certified organic cotton fibre supplies grew by 95%, significantly higher than annual growth rates of 45% in 2006 and 53% in 2007. According to the report, the production increase was driven in large part by the heightened demand for organic cotton from small- to large-sized retailers around the world.

Organic cotton farmers saw the range in average price they received per pound increase from between \$0.85 and \$1.25 for organic upland cotton in 2006 to between \$1 and \$2.0 in 2010. Global production of organic cotton is given in Table-2.

More than half the global production of organic cotton is in the hands of two companies – one in Turkey and the other in India, while the 25 largest brands and retailers absorb some 60% of the global organic cotton.

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There are a number of companies driving the expanded use of domestic and international organic cotton. As a result of consumer interest, organic cotton fiber is used in everything from personal care items (sanitary products, make-up removal pads, cotton puffs and ear swabs), to home furnishings (towels, bathrobes, sheets, blankets, bedding), childrens products (toys, diapers), clothes of all kinds and styles (whether for lounging, sports or the workplace), and even stationery and note cards. In addition, organic cottonseed is used for animal feed, and organic cottonseed oil is used in a variety of food products, including cookies and chips.

The demand for, and supply of, organic cotton fibre products and also by-products has grown dramatically in recent years, indicating strong interest from both global retail markets and farmers in growing cotton organically.

## Need for Organic cotton in Pakistan

Pakistan is the fifth largest producer of cotton in the world, the third largest exporter of raw cotton, the fourth largest consumer of cotton, and the largest exporter of cotton yarn). The cotton is cultivated over 3 million hectares, covering 15% of the cultivable area in the country. Cotton and cotton products contribute about 10% to GDP and 55% to the foreign exchange earnings of the country.

Cotton production supports Pakistan's largest industrial sector, comprising some 400 textile mills, 11 million spindles, 27,000 looms in the mill sector (including 15,000 shuttleless looms), over 250,000 looms in the non-mill sector, 700 knitwear units, 4,000 garment units (with 200,000 sewing machines), 650 dyeing and finishing units (with finishing capacity of 1,150 million square meters per year), nearly 1,000 ginneries, 300 oil expellers, and 15,000 to 20,000 indigenous, small scale oil expellers (kohlus).

Genetically modified cotton is widely used throughout the world. In Pakistan, Bt cotton was introduced through informal sector in 2002 as a means to reduce crop damage due to bollworms and consequently improve yields. This was a major step

forward, but a number of factors have kept it from realizing its full potential.

In recent past two major factors had a significant impact on the economics of cotton production. They are extensive use of agrochemicals and yield stagnation. Among all agrochemicals, fertilizers and insecticides are of utmost importance. There are no efficient alternatives to synthetic fertilizers and cotton production has to bear the use of nutrient supplements in the form of inorganic fertilizers. Among pesticides, insecticides are group of agrochemicals which is extensively used on cotton.

An Organic Cotton project was launched by Kings Group in January 2000. Today it yields 80,000 kg of organic cotton lint & supplies Garments made of Organic Cotton to customers in Europe & the United States in accordance with their special requirements. According to Kings Group, a small village 80 km North West from Karachi in the fertile Lasbela district in the province of Baluchistan was chosen to grow organic cotton. The village is accessible from Karachi by a major highway. The land was mostly virgin but fertile. Today cotton of the highest quality is grown on 3000 acres of land cultivated on the principles of organic agriculture.

Future prospects for organic cotton appear promising due to potential demand and limited supply in the world market. The Pakistan Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MINFA) is also engaged in preparing a regional project to produce organic cotton as part of a project funded by the Common Fund for Commodity (CFC) under the advice of International Cotton Advisory Committee (ICAC), Washington D.C.

Pakistan cotton yields have been stagnant for the last several years. Factors responsible for the stagnant cotton production include: excessive rains at the time of sowing, high temperatures at the flowering stage, late wheat harvesting resulting in a decline of area planted to cotton, incidence of Cotton Leaf Curl Virus, pest attack and improper production technology in the major cotton growing areas of Punjab and Sindh.

## Conclusion

Organic cotton production is a system of growing cotton without synthetic chemical fertilizers, herbicides, conventional synthetic insecticides, growth regulators, growth stimulators, boll openers or defoliants. It is a system that contributes to healthy soils and/or people. The organic system promotes enhanced biological activity, encourages sustainability and commands proactive management of production.

Because organic practices recognize and respect the powerful nature of antibiotics, organic practices protect human health in the long term. Organic practices prohibit the use of hormones, antibiotics or other animal drugs in animal feed for the purpose of stimulating the growth or production of livestock. If an antibiotic is used to restore an animal to health, that animal cannot be used for organic production or be sold, labelled or represented as organic. Thus, organic practices avoid the abuse of antibiotics that could have profound consequences for treatment of disease in humans, including the serious dangers of antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

## References

1. Organic Cotton Farm and Fiber Report -2010.
2. Organic Cotton Production, the ICAC Recorder, December 10, 2011.
3. Various issues of Organic Cotton Market Reports.
4. Kings Group: [www.kingsapparel.com](http://www.kingsapparel.com). ♦

**Table 2: Global Production of Organic Cotton**

Year	Production (Tonnes)
2000	6,480
2004	25,394
2005	31,017
2006	40,322
2007	57,932
2008	145,872
2009	209,950
2010	241,276

Source: Various issues of Organic Cotton Market Reports.