

Clothing the world: Cotton Action Research Collaboratory

Aim

This Collaboratory will investigate the dependency and impact of cotton upon natural capital (particularly water, biodiversity and soil) and consider the different interventions that business can make through informed investments and strategic decisions to secure their supply of cotton.

What is this Collaboratory?

There are gaps both in understanding the relationship between cotton and natural capital and in what the most appropriate interventions to address the natural capital challenges are. A stronger evidence base is required that can direct business to suitable decisions on their cotton supply chains, particularly around the actions at the growing stage of the supply chain where the natural capital challenges are most prevalent.

The requirement is not to create a new certification scheme, but rather knit together the many initiatives that support businesses in cotton growing areas and identify the natural capital areas that are not adequately addressed. As such, this Collaboratory will complement and go beyond the current principle-based approaches associated with many current initiatives by considering not just management practices (inputs) but the dependences and impacts upon natural capital as well (outputs).

As brands source from different strategic areas, the Collaboratory will recognise the specific contexts of cotton interventions. It will enable companies to understand the wider ecological impacts of cotton production, underpinned by common foundations but be flexible for different regions.

This Collaboratory is designed for, and driven by, private business. It will demonstrate that, by coordinating and collaborating, the private sector can find appropriate solutions around sustainable cotton supply.

Key outputs

The proposed outputs of this Action Research Collaboratory (ARC) to be delivered over a 9 month period are:

- A summary of the dependencies and impacts of cotton upon natural capital, namely on water, biodiversity and soil, and to include greenhouse gases. This will acknowledge social and economic dependencies and impacts.
- A matrix of current interventions mapped onto the water, biodiversity and soil. This will identify the gaps that still need to be addressed to secure cotton supply and safeguard the natural capital it depends on.
- A critical and systematic review of the evidence linking interventions to the enhancement of natural capital.
- A collective business voice to leverage change within cotton supply chains on natural capital.

These outputs are designed to enable businesses to plan their strategies and investments in their cotton supply chains.

Timeline

An indicative timeline is shown below:

	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Summarise impacts and dependencies										
Kick-off teleconference		◆ Kick-off								
Natural Bridge event		◆ Natural Bridge								
Critical review process				◆ Progress meeting						
Develop intervention matrix							◆ Progress meeting			
Consolidate findings										
Launch event to engage apparel sector on cotton and natural capital										◆ Launch

For more information contact:

Gemma Cranston, Senior Programme Manager, Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership.

Email: gemma.cranston@cisl.cam.ac.uk

tel: +44 1223 761711

mob: +44 7795 580389