



**COTTON**  
MADE IN  
**AFRICA**

# COTTON MADE IN AFRICA

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

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## **Cotton made in Africa: The Label for Sustainable Cotton from Africa**

**Cotton made in Africa (CmiA) is an Aid by Trade Foundation (AbTF) initiative and the largest label for sustainably produced cotton from Africa. Since its creation by Dr. Michael Otto in 2005, it has set for itself the goal to protect the environment and help Sub Saharan African smallholder cotton farmers and ginnery workers<sup>1</sup> improve their living and working conditions. To put this aim into practice, the initiative's approach focuses on activating market forces instead of aid. An alliance of international textile companies and brands built up by CmiA purchase the CmiA certified sustainable cotton, integrate it into their respective textile value chains and pay a license fee to the foundation to use the seal. The license fees paid by the demand partners are directly reinvested to benefit smallholder farmers, their families, ginnery workers in the project countries and nature protection. A small red product label shows the consumer that with his purchase he has done something particularly good for the people in the producing countries and the environment.**

Under the CmiA credo to help people help themselves Cotton made in Africa stands for an innovative approach that combines the aims of development cooperation with those of sustainable trade. Qualification programmes teach smallholder farmers about efficient and environmentally friendly cultivation methods that protect the environment and enable the farmers in the producing countries to live a better life. CmiA cotton is not artificially irrigated. Instead it is only rain-fed cultivated, GMO-free and has a considerably smaller ecological footprint than conventionally grown cotton. Per kilogram of cotton, CmiA saves more than 2,000 liters of water and emits up to 40% less greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>2</sup> Deforestation of primary forests or the use of highly hazardous pesticides according to international conventions are as strictly forbidden as slavery, human trafficking or child labor. International conventions for ethical trade such as the ILO core labour standards are firmly anchored in the set of the CmiA sustainability criteria. Being part of the CmiA program ensures fair working conditions not only on the cotton fields but also in the Sub Saharan African cotton ginning industry.

Whereas 145,000 smallholder farmers were part of the CmiA initiative in 2009, more than one million cotton farmers, their family members and about 11,000 ginnery workers from Mozambique, Zambia, Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Ghana and Cameroun, Tanzania, Uganda and Ethiopia

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<sup>1</sup> Ginneries: Factories where cotton fibers get separated from the seeds. It is the first step of the cotton supply chain.

<sup>2</sup> Water saving: in comparison to the global average; greenhouse gas emissions: in comparison to conventional cotton (Source: PE INTERNATIONAL Study)



currently participate in CmiA. In 2017, 496,000 tons of certified CmiA cotton have been produced pursuant to the CmiA sustainability criteria.<sup>3</sup>

On the marketing end, Cotton made in Africa relies on a global alliance of textile companies and brands that are specifically interested in purchasing sustainably produced CmiA cotton, which then enters the global production markets and is processed into textiles. In 2017, more than 30 textile companies and brands including Bonprix or OTTO among others within the Otto Group, Rewe group, Tchibo, Ernsting's family, Engelbert Strauss, Asos, Bestseller, Dibella or Aldi Süd put about 90 million CmiA labelled textiles on the market. The licensing fees for CmiA certified cotton paid by the demand partners are reinvested in the growing regions to benefit the cotton farmers in the project countries – in agricultural trainings, the CmiA certification, "Farmer Business Schools" that teach smallholder farmers basic business skills, or initiatives specifically designed to support women on their way to economic and social independence. All the implemented measures help the cotton farmers to successfully manage their small business, thus improve the lives of their whole family and protect nature.

As part of a sustainable development partnership, the initiative works with a variety of public and private partners and non-governmental organisations. In addition to the Welthungerhilfe, the WWF, CARE International and the Naturschutzbund Germany, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation (BMZ) and others participate in Cotton made in Africa. Local cotton companies are essential to realizing the goals in the African project countries.

#### The Aid by Trade Foundation

The Aid by Trade Foundation was established in 2005 by Dr Michael Otto, a Hamburg-based entrepreneur and Chairman of the Supervisory Board of the Otto Group. Since its creation, the AbTF is an independent foundation whose goal is to help people help themselves through trade, and thus to secure the conservation of vital natural resources and the future of future generations. With its Cotton made in Africa initiative, the foundation literally puts the principle of "aid by trade" into practice.

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<sup>3</sup> CmiA cotton is grown in different climatic zones in Sub-Saharan Africa. Just as divergent are the cotton harvest periods per country. To facilitate communication and to communicate reliable, up-to-date figures, the data rely on results from concluded harvest seasons CmiA cotton is grown, harvested and ginned in (West-and Central Africa 2016/2017; South and East Africa: 2017/2018).