

Cotton Feeds the World

Bremen, 9th October 2017. Cotton is not only a fibre for the textile industry. Its sphere of influence goes much further: it is an essential economic factor for many farmers and workers in developing countries.

Lately, the International Cotton Advisory Committee (ICAC), Washington, presented the results of a recent assessment of the number of people employed in the cotton sector. In its estimates for employment in cotton growing in the 2015/16 season, the ICAC assumes around 200 million people. This maximum includes an estimate of more than 61 million cotton farmers. In India, more than 50 million people work in the production of cotton. Almost 55 million people are working in cotton production in Africa. This reaffirms the assessment of the Bremen Cotton Exchange, according to which the cotton industry has a high potential to create work and prosperity. This is especially the case in developing countries, where agriculture is the only means of earning for the majority of the population.

The figures show how much of a responsibility the cotton-producing countries have to permanently achieve a satisfactory livelihood for the people in developing countries. However, cotton is being criticized very often regarding its ecological footprint, based on wrong or not updated data. In the long term the reputation of cotton will be damaged. This could lead to a shrinking cotton demand and at the same time cause damage to the livelihood of many people.

"If cotton is criticised as not sustainable, this poses the question of facts and objective data. We observe that the discussion often takes place on the basis of obsolete or even incorrect information. Rapid internet research cannot replace discussion with international research, science and business. In cotton growing, this is simply a prerequisite for a reasonable assessment of the situation. Specialist

knowledge and expertise are required”, stresses Elke Hortmeyer, Director of Communications at the Bremen Cotton Exchange.

This also applies to the recently published Sustainable Cotton Ranking 2017 by Pesticide Action Network UK, Solidaridad and WWF that cannot be considered representative for the textile sector as only 75 companies in the world had been interviewed.

The makers of this study criticise the large discrepancy between the supply of sustainable cotton and its actual usage by retailers, but are unable to name the reasons and do not actually define sustainability. It assesses a whole industry on the basis of only four initiatives and disregards the rest. The study quotes old numbers in pest management and irrigation, without acknowledging further developments, even in conventional cotton growing. Overall, the study lacks an economic assessment that includes the market pressures on cotton caused by competing synthetic textiles. As a result, this generally harms the reputation of cotton as a product - a product that serves as a livelihood of millions of farmers and, as a biodegradable fibre, is sustainable to its roots.

The Bremen Cotton Exchange is available with its know-how to answer questions from institutions and the media about the current situation in cotton farming in general, as well as the situation in developing countries. Cotton makes a significant contribution to reducing poverty and feeds millions of people in developing countries. This must not be undermined.

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About the Bremen Cotton Exchange:

For more than 140 years the Bremen Cotton Exchange has offered its members a wide range of services around the theme of cotton and is a nationally recognised association with legal capacity. According to its statutes, its aim is to safeguard and promote the interests of all market participants involved in cotton trading, as well as in the processing and finishing of cotton or products made of other textile fibres.

As an international court of arbitration, the Bremen Cotton Exchange always stands for neutrality. We offer various services to our members. Clear and neutral data and analyses are a part of this.

As the ICA Bremen, together with the International Cotton Association in Liverpool and in cooperation with the Fibre Institute Bremen, we provide the International Quality Testing and Research Centre in Bremen. The Hanseatic city has now become the international centre for cotton testing and research, quality training and certification.

We represent our members in all the important international bodies in the cotton world.