

WOMEN IN COTTON

RESULTS OF A GLOBAL SURVEY



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Study dealing with the role of women along the cotton value chain in cotton producing countries in different regions of the world, with special focus on Africa – outlines women's role in various cotton production activities in Africa, Asia and Latin America; compares women's participation in the total workforce in these regions; provides ideas on how to streamline gender development along the chain and how to improve the role of women, while at the same time improving the sector's competitiveness.

Descriptors: **Cotton, Value Chain, Gender.**

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English

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Foreword

Cotton is an important sector for many countries, industrialized or developing, around the world. In developing countries it contributes to poverty reduction and is an important engine for growth. The sector involves women and men in all aspects but has traditionally been dominated by men, especially with regard to management functions. The role of women in the cotton sector has not been looked at in detail. To our knowledge, no comparative study exists that analyses the role of women along the entire cotton value chain from farming to ginning and subsequently cotton trade.

This paper is not a scientific analysis of the role of women in the cotton sector. It is based on structured voluntary information received from a wide network of ITC cotton contacts around the world. It was compiled on a no-cost basis. Nevertheless, it provides some interesting insights into the role of women in the cotton sector worldwide with a focus on Africa. This focus is due to ITC's active involvement in increasing the competitiveness of the African cotton sector. It provides ideas on how to streamline gender development along the cotton value chain and where development assistance providers could hook on to improve the role of women, while at the same time improving the sector's competitiveness. That way several development objectives could be met.

This technical paper was prepared using the contacts and experience gained under ITC's African Cotton Development Initiative, which focuses on the following aspects:

Facilitate South – South cooperation.

- Learning from success. Training programmes organized by ITC allow successful cotton producers in e.g. China, India and Turkey to share their knowledge with cotton professionals from Africa.
- Developing capacity to transform cotton. Successful textile and clothing producers in Asia are relaying their experiences to African countries. Closer linkages with cotton consuming spinning mills will lead to closer partnerships between spinners, ginner and farmer groups.
- Encouraging intra-African cooperation. Extensive knowledge and know how is available in Africa but often neglected.

Developing sustainable trade linkages.

- Promoting African cotton in world markets.
- Reducing cotton contamination in Africa remains an important issue even though in many cases the reputation of African cotton is “more contaminated” than the actual cotton itself.
- Sourcing from other developing countries. Finding new suppliers in the developing world promotes savings on items ranging from seeds and fertilizer to ginning and textile technology.

Sector strategy development at national and regional level.

Capacity building of cotton-related associations at national and regional level.

Capacity building on cotton trade and marketing.

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