

# Adapting to a Landscape Approach (ATLA)

## Learnings from pilots in Turkey and Pakistan

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There are different ways in which sustainability systems can operate at landscape level. The ATLA project was designed to explore some of the key considerations at play in these strategic decisions, such as where to focus efforts, the scale of time and resources needed, how to measure performance at landscape level, and what it means to work in partnership with existing multi-stakeholder initiatives. Two project pilots, in Turkey and Pakistan, provided practical insights for these strategic decisions in the case of Better Cotton. The learnings are summarised in this report and complement the strategy recommendations outlined in the accompanying executive summary.<sup>1</sup>

### Choosing the right entry points to a landscape approach for Better Cotton

Early in the project, Better Cotton worked with Proforest to gain an overview of the different ways in which the organisation could approach landscape-level interventions. The different scenarios are captured in the decision tree in Annex A. The pilot in Turkey was designed to test a 'light' approach whereas the pilot in Pakistan looked at building a jurisdictional initiative as a step towards national embedding.

- *Working with different levels of local organisational development*

In Turkey the pilot relied heavily on the local capacity for management and implementation of WWF-Turkey and IPUD, and the strong working relationship between them. In 2018, IPUD - Better Cotton's implementation partner in Turkey – was invited to be one of the 11 members of the Söke Cotton Water Stewardship Steering Committee, a newly formed multi-stakeholder platform convened by WWF Turkey's Büyük Menderes Water Stewardship Programme. This collaboration created the opportunity to explore how the Better Cotton system could be adapted to support the uptake and monitoring of sustainable production practices across a specific landscape, while also building the governance of that landscape in partnership with an existing initiative.

The pilot project was primarily managed by IPUD with little/very little direct involvement of Better Cotton staff. This model is scalable across geographies where Better Cotton does not have a physical presence. Since this initiative has been already started by the implementation partner and Better Cotton was not included in the initial phases, in practice this approach might seem to limit opportunity for Better Cotton to steer and shape the landscape program. However, the governance mechanism allows any actor including Better Cotton team to become a strong partner of such initiatives. It is recommended that Better Cotton's Principles & Criteria and M&E teams build strong connections with the implementation partner at local level. Having staff in the region and /or leading the program allows Better Cotton to be more involved and offer more technical support to the implementation partner and the landscape initiative.

In Pakistan, there was no existing landscape initiative and the pilot provided insights on what it means to build one from the ground. The Better Cotton country team was able to take the lead in conceptualising the project but had to bring in support from a consultant to support detailed design. It took some time to

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<sup>1</sup> An executive summary of the strategy recommendations is available from: [www.isealliance.org/innovations-standards/innovations-projects/adapting-landscape-approach](http://www.isealliance.org/innovations-standards/innovations-projects/adapting-landscape-approach)

source a consultant with the rights skills and capacity. There has been an assumption that AED will play a lead role in due course, not only as an implementing agency for Better Cotton but also convening and driving forward the jurisdictional initiative as potential for national embedding of the Better Cotton is explored. This process has taken some time to roll out, going through the steps of initial stakeholder mapping and engagement, screening and prioritizing for further engagement to incite interest in joining a National Stakeholder Council (NSC). A Terms of Reference was developed for the NSC and the inaugural meeting took place earlier this year.

In both pilots, it was key to have a strong implementation partner and a prospect of external resourcing of a landscape multi-stakeholder initiative. The potential for external resourcing at landscape level has had more consideration in the Pakistan pilot since Turkey WWF will continue investing their own resources for the medium term at least.

- *Addressing different hotspot issues at landscape level*

Sustainable water management has been the leading issue in the selected landscape in Turkey, and one best addressed with action at landscape level. Biodiversity and soil management are recognised as important, but not the priority. Decent work is theoretically significant but not on the agenda. The newly formed NSC in Pakistan is due to identify hotspot issues as part of their meetings in 2022.

- *Additional items that might be included on checklist to inform Better Cotton decisions on investment in a specific opportunity to pursue a landscape approach:*
  - What core issue is the current initiative addressing in the landscape?
  - Are these issues aligned with the Better Cotton principles?
  - If it is addressing only one or two of the issues linked to Better Cotton principles, are the stakeholders keen to scale it up and look at all the core issues?
  - Does the Better Cotton team have capacity/leverage in the landscape to steer the program?
  - What role does the Better Cotton team have currently in the landscape initiative?
  - Does the landscape initiative include the key stakeholders (public and private) in the landscape?
  - Is the implementation partner or the entity coordinating the landscape initiative interested and capable to scale up the landscape initiative to a more holistic jurisdictional initiative

## Understanding changes to scope and scale needed to operate at landscape level

In Turkey, the initial interest was in testing a 'light' landscape approach by focusing on one or two key impact areas relevant to the Better Cotton principles, namely water stewardship. There have been challenges to broadening the scope and scale of the existing initiative accordingly, maybe because:

- There was strong pre-existing WWF ownership of this program.
- WWF mission and vision overlap but are not identical to Better Cotton
- Skill set of the WWF-Turkey landscape team pre-determines the emphasis of effort and prioritisation of objectives

IPUD hesitated to push for expansion of the mandate of the existing initiative to address other priority areas because the focus is currently on piloting and demonstrating the benefits of modern irrigation and influencing government to change policy to overcome the technical and the financial barriers of investing in modern irrigation systems in Turkey including subsidy mechanisms.

A light approach with a landscape initiative addressing one Better Cotton principle could be the end goal without necessarily having to scale up. This could be considered a credible landscape approach, notwithstanding the fact that it is not addressing all the principles/core issues in the landscape. Based on this experience, it seems Better Cotton should not restrict itself to focus only on holistic jurisdictional approaches but could also continue supporting light approaches in certain circumstances.

In Pakistan, the initial interest was in assessing the extent to which the Better Cotton standard system could be embedded within the Pakistan State System, while engaging with relevant stakeholders through a jurisdictional approach to make this happen. The establishment of the NSC is being pursued as a starting point for development of a jurisdictional approach. However, in spite of laying the foundation for a governance structure, the Pakistan pilot has not progressed enough to be able to draw conclusions on the potential for national embedding to provide benefits similar to a jurisdictional approach.

### Applying principles and criteria at landscape level

Landscape level monitoring is not a traditional role for a standard setting organisation. As part of the project, Proforest created the Matrix Assessment Tool below to support standard setting organisations like Better Cotton think about goals/desired outcomes in a landscape, activities to deliver on these outcomes, and indicators to track and verify progress and performance.

Thematic area (illustrative list, which could be narrowed down or elaborated upon for any given project)	Desired outcome linked to the Better Cotton ToC	Steps/ process towards continuous improvement	Role of actors				Who/How can this outcome be measured/verified?
			Supply chain/ Supply shed	MSI/ LSI	Jurisdictional governance structure	Better Cotton NSC	
Water Stewardship							
Biodiversity							
Soil Health							
Decent work							
Sustainable livelihoods <sup>[1]</sup>							

The collaboration in Turkey offered a valuable opportunity to apply and refine the matrix tool through an iterative process. The tool helped the Söke Cotton Water Stewardship Steering Committee to identify long term performance outcomes as well as the roles of the different actors and the timelines for realizing the outcomes. WWF is developing a scorecard, as part of ATLA, that will support producers in planning and measuring their performance on input, water, soil and social aspects.

The indicators selected by the Söke Cotton Water Stewardship Steering Committee use a combination of remote sensing and on-site techniques to monitoring landscape performance. The monitoring framework is resource intensive, and it will take several years to reliably capture any improvements in performance. The use of GIS technology especially requires additional technical expertise and financial support. It is important for the landscape initiative to secure those resources in advance for long-term implementation. The private sector could be approached to play a role supporting landscape performance monitoring.

Indicators in the current Better Cotton standard cannot be directly applied for the landscape program. Existing Better Cotton standard can be considered as process indicators, but they need to be re-designed with performance indicators too to address landscape level interventions.

In addition to sustainability performance, the experience in Turkey highlighted that there should be some mandatory indicators reflecting the three catalysts as fundamental components of landscape level intervention: Governance, Markets, Finance. Possible indicators include:

- Governance mechanism of the landscape initiative
- M&E strategy and tools for monitoring
- Securing finance to create a base for public - private investment mechanisms
- Engagement of relevant market actors

## Using GIS technology for monitoring landscape performance

During the pilot in Turkey, GIS technology was used to:

- Develop a baseline for understanding the impact of landscape level interventions
- Analyse ecosystem services to better understand the status of key habitats in the landscape
- Understand how changes in land use may have already influenced or will influence soil, water and biodiversity measures.

Following a site visit, the Better Cotton team agreed that it is important to continue exploring the possibility of using GIS as a learning and monitoring tool for the implementation partner and farmers as it would reduce the monitoring burden on farmers. As a next step, WWF will geolocate Better Cotton farmers and identify the parameters that could best support their continuous learning. This will help determine which parameter can be monitored through remote sensing and which through ground data.

## Insights into the level of effort (time and resources) required from Better Cotton

A 'light' approach, such as for the Turkey pilot – building on existing landscape initiative, with limited thematic scope, where there is already an interested and capable Better Cotton implementation partner:

- Medium term, part-time investment of time for key personnel
- Some specialist technical support (notably on GIS)
- Existing financial support for Büyük Menderes Water Stewardship Programme from partner brands for landscape related activities (i.e., regenerative pilot implementation, Committee facilitation expenditures, third party and staff costs etc.)
- Longer term expectation to leverage further resources from private sector or public/donor funding to implement agreed actions within landscape plan

Based on the experience in Büyük Menderes, WWF have suggested minimum in-country core costs for an implementation partner like WWF to implement a landscape approach could vary between €50k and €150k/year. The level of support from outside the region for landscape programme design would depend greatly on the capacities of local actors, but at a rough estimate this might add 20-30% to the core costs for set up. Where additional funds have been channelled to the initiative from brands (in this case leveraged via WWF's Water Stewardship program), through Better Cotton and project funding via the ATLA project, these have helped enable/facilitate the landscape approach, but they might have been justified with or without the development of a landscape approach.

Better Cotton and its local implementation partner would need additional resources to remain engaged in the initiative thereafter, especially in refining the monitoring system with GIS and the performance scorecard. It could take 5-10 years to deliver measurable change at landscape level.

It is difficult to estimate the level of effort for initiating a jurisdictional approach from scratch as the work in Pakistan built on earlier work by Better Cotton. To bring people together and support alignment on goals and targets at jurisdictional level, Better Cotton has assigned a dedicated lead within the Better Cotton team, plus support staff and external specialist technical consultant support. Even with Better Cotton's previous work in Pakistan, it took several months to initiate and develop working relations with other stakeholders, and then establish governance and management structures for cross-stakeholder working. To design landscape plan and secure resources for implementation could take several years.

## Building partnerships for long-term implementation

- *Opportunities for public sector engagement and support*

The pilot in Turkey illustrates one potential route for engagement with the public sector: the Söke Cotton Water Stewardship Steering Committee regularly met with local and national public institutions to seek finance and ask for policy changes related to the existing intensive mechanism.

- *Imperative for private sector support*

The pilot in Turkey highlighted the importance of securing the engagement of the private sector when investing in landscape initiatives. While it has received support from the private sector, the initiative lacks private sector commitment to sustain long-term landscape monitoring and site level investments.

When engaging in landscape level interventions, sustainability systems like Better Cotton should prioritise proactive engagement of the private sector. It is fundamental to have a business case to attract the private sector to invest based on corporate commitments, certification/labelling schemes, payment for ecosystem services. Early participation of the private sector in shaping the goals of the landscape program should aid buy-in and long-term commitment. In Turkey, the next step is to develop a business model for cotton supply chain including transparency and traceability, finance and market mechanisms which will help to engage the actors to the landscape.

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## Annex A. Decision tree

