



FACTSHEET COTTON

WHAT IS COTTON?

Cotton is a natural fibre that is grown agriculturally and is therefore a renewable raw material. The cotton plant belongs to the mallow family, like the hibiscus and the cocoa tree. The cotton fibre is the seed hair of the ripe fruit. Cotton is a semi-arid plant. This means that it prefers warm areas and can get by with little water, due to its taproot.

WHERE DOES COTTON GROW?

Around 26 million tonnes of cotton are produced every year. Worldwide, approximately 150 million people are involved in its production and further processing. The largest producing countries of the natural fibre are India, China, the USA and Brazil. While India and China process most of their cotton production themselves, the USA and Brazil are the world's two largest cotton exporters. China is not only one of the largest cotton producers, but also the largest cotton processor with around eight million tonnes.

WHAT IS MADE OF COTTON?

Cotton is mainly used for the production of clothing and textiles, i.e. it is first made into yarn, then into fabric and finally into a finished piece of clothing or similar. But there are many other uses for the natural fibre. For example, our banknotes are made from cotton, in

the automotive industry cotton is the basis for composites and the seed oil is also increasingly being used in cosmetics.

WHAT IS SO GOOD ABOUT COTTON?

People have valued the properties of cotton for 5,000 years. Cotton is breathable, absorbs moisture up to 27 times its own weight and has a low allergy potential. Against the background of the current discussion about sustainability and sustainable consumption, the role of natural fibres is becoming even more important. Cotton is biodegradable and a renewable resource.

WHAT DOES "SUSTAINABLE COTTON" MEAN?

Given the increasing world population and dwindling resources, the topic of sustainability has also received greater resonance within the cotton industry. Certification systems for cotton take ecological and/or social criteria into account in their assessment and there are now numerous different programmes.

With a current licensing volume of 5.6 million tonnes of cotton, the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) is the largest project for certified sustainable cotton production. Under the sustainability standard Cotton made in Africa (CmiA) almost 600,000 tonnes of cotton are currently being produced. Controlled organic cotton currently has a production volume of almost 240,000 tonnes.